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NATIONAL REVIEW

FEBRUARY 7, 2000 VOL. LII, NO. 2

ARTICLES

- 16 Iowa Stubborn *by Gary Geipel*
The trouble with the caucus.
- 17 La Donna Is Catastrophe *by John J. Miller*
Gore's ghastly Brazile.
- 20 Agony over Elián *by Kate O'Beirne*
The anti-anti-Communists are back.
- 21 Of All the Dictators . . . *by Anthony Daniels*
Why the Left singles out Pinochet.
- 22 X-Percent Plans *by Shelby Steele*
After preferences, more race games.
- 26 A Vet They Can Love *by Mark Steyn*
Why McCain, and not Bob Dole.
- 28 The Special-Interest State . . . *by John O. McGinnis*
. . . and how not to change it.
- 29 Debtors' Prison *by Ramesh Ponnuru*
McCain leads the GOP the wrong way.
- 31 TR and His Fan *by Richard Lowry*
Roosevelt and McCain, for good and ill.
- 33 The Comeback Kid, Indeed *by Jay Nordlinger*
How Clinton is winning.
- 35 Against Microsoft *by Robert H. Bork*
A primer for conservatives, *with responses*
by Richard A. Epstein and Holman W. Jenkins Jr.

Cover art by Roman Genn

BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

A Low, Dishonest Decade—*John Podhoretz, page 42*
How We Got Here: The 70's: The Decade That Brought
You Modern Life (For Better or Worse), *by David Frum*

The Trouble with Stanley—*Harvey C. Mansfield, page 46*
The Trouble with Principle, *by Stanley Fish*

The Family Business—*Francis X. Rocca, page 48*
Between Father and Son: Family Letters, *by V. S. Naipaul,*
edited by Gillon Aitken

Gandhi Lite—*Kanchan Limaye, page 50*
The Cost of Living, *by Arundhati Roy*

City Desk: Countdown to Nothing—*Richard*
Brookhiser on the last days of New York's last golden age, page 52

SECTIONS

- 2 Letters
4 For the Record
6 The Week
39 Letter from AI
40 Help!
54 On the Right
56 The Misanthrope's Corner

WORLD WIDE WEB

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Business Services

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PUBLISHER
Edward A. Capano

■ LETTERS ■

QUESTIONABLE CONSERVATISM

Richard Brookhiser's synopsis of America at the turn of the century ("Pluribus, and Unum," Jan. 24) is laden with an astonishing contempt—for the Mexican teenager so bold as to "smile below Aztec cheekbones," for the Catholic so unabashed as to keep an image of the Virgin Mary, and for the common man slouching over his International House of Pancakes "Lumberjack Special"—which is contrary to conservatism. In decrying "a nation of slob," Brookhiser exhibits a deluded worldview more amenable to the irrational privileges of feudalism and aristocracy than to the energizing individualism of capitalism and democracy.

Joseph Rillotta
Arlington, Va.

PALM TREES, PINEAPPLES, AND SHAME

NATIONAL REVIEW was too quick to dismiss the idea of apologizing to native Hawaiians for America's role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy ("The Week," Dec. 31). Far from simply being a figment of the Clinton administration's guilty conscience, the shameful part this country played in the Hawaiian coup was recognized as long ago as 1893, when President Cleveland called for the restoration of Queen Liliuokalani to her throne.

Those who overthrew the monarchy no more represented the will of the Hawaiian people than the Communists who overthrew the Baltic governments in 1940. NR was always a consistent defender of the Baltic states' right to independent existence. As a subscriber of 15 years, I find it a shame that you're apparently not willing to apply the same standards here at home.

Andrew Rogers
Seattle, Wash.

HEALTH-CARE PAIN

Jay Nordlinger finds Hillary Clinton at home in her quest for the Senate, able to promote "her pet, 'national health care,'" in "the more hospitable climes of New York" ("Super Dem," Dec. 20).

Why would a northern border state like New York want a replica of Canada's crumbling health-care system? People in Plattsburgh, an hour's drive from Montreal, are aware of the desperation with

which sick Canadians, worn down by the delays at home, are laying out their own 67-cent dollars to get treatment. Plattsburgh's clinics are expanding to accommodate them, as well as cancer patients sent down by the Quebec government, which cannot supply the bare minimum of treatment, let alone the level of health care that most Americans expect.

Generally, even those Americans who have no private insurance at all now receive better health care than Canadians. But oddly enough, some of the Canadians being treated privately in Plattsburgh still defend the Canadian system by citing statistics on uninsured Americans. So Nordlinger's general point about Mrs. Clinton's chances may be valid. People like to feel insured even if the coverage is worthless. An opponent of Mrs. Clinton, nevertheless, might make good use of the near-constant stream of horror stories on New York's northern doorstep. If nothing else, it would help voters in the border regions connect the dots. Voters should ask if either one of the Clintons would seek treatment at a Canadian hospital.

Lionel Albert
Knowlton, Quebec

DEFINING DEMOCRACY DOWN

Thank you very much for Jonah Goldberg's excellent article "Vote.con" (Dec. 20), expressing concerns about Internet voting. The Voting Integrity Project (www.votingintegrity.org) has published a study of the subject. We share Goldberg's qualms about online voting, which, like the growing trends toward "early" and mail-in voting, transgresses the congressional mandate for federal elections to be held on a specific day.

An equally disturbing issue that Goldberg did not address is voter fraud, which would be compounded if elections were conducted in cyberspace. Already a serious problem in the country, ineligible and fraudulent voters would be even more difficult to detect in a system where no one has to appear in person to cast a vote.

As a longtime political activist, I can attest to the crucial need for more—not less—personal involvement by citizens in the electoral process.

Helen Blackwell
Arlington, Va.



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■ FOR THE RECORD ■

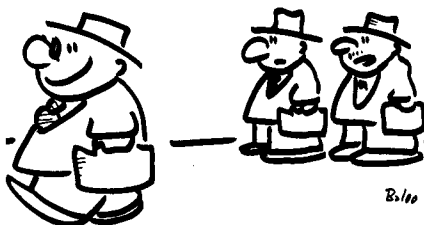
■ In Marist Institute poll of New York voters, **Hillary Clinton** earns positive marks from 48 percent—down 20 percentage points from one year ago. **Rudy Giuliani** maintains favorable rating of 61 percent over same period and leads Clinton in hypothetical matchup, 49 percent to 40 percent. . . . CBS News reporter **Lesley Stahl** opines on Hillary in *Philadelphia Inquirer*: “I’m endlessly fascinated by her. . . . She’s so smart. Virtually every time I’ve seen her perform, she has knocked my socks off.” . . . In Zogby poll, 42 percent are “ashamed” **Bill Clinton** is president, 39 percent are “proud,” and 20 percent aren’t sure.

■ Vice President **Gore**, on Clinton’s affair with **Monica Lewinsky**: “I wouldn’t have done that.” . . . Gore, on whether “young women today are too sexually active,” in *Glamour* magazine interview: “I don’t know! . . . I just have no first-hand experience!” . . . **Bill Bradley** says he voted for farm bill because Clinton promised to make changes after passage, adds: “I took his word, which isn’t, you know, always the best thing to do.” . . . **Kareena Gore Schiff**, on her father: “He thought there were horrible injustices going on in the country [during the **Reagan** years], and that people should be more socially conscious. . . . And it meant something to me that I was hearing the same thing from him as I was hearing from the punk band . . . I liked to listen to.”

■ **Phyllis Schlafly** says that if she could vote in Iowa caucus, she’d pick **Steve Forbes**. . . . **George W. Bush**’s biggest mistake as an adult? “I signed off on that wonderful transaction: **Sammy Sosa** for **Harold Baines**,” he says in South Carolina debate, referring to 1989 trade that sent rookie Sosa, now a home-run hero for Chicago Cubs, from Texas Rangers to Chicago White Sox. . . . Former **President Bush**, campaigning for his son in Iowa: “He’d be excellent at doing what I tried to do.” . . . Sen. **John McCain** (R., Ariz.) proposes cabinet-level post to “reform the institutions of government” and deal with campaign-finance issues. Asked whether Sen. **Russ Feingold** (D., Wis.) might be suitable,

McCain replies: “That wouldn’t be a bad idea.” . . . **Donald Trump**, on McCain: “He was captured. . . . Does being captured make you a hero? I don’t know. I’m not sure.” . . . Sen. **John Ashcroft** (R., Mo.), onetime GOP presidential contender, endorses Bush. . . . Sen. **Orrin Hatch** (R., Utah), in televised address: “This administration may be remembered as the most deceitful and corrupt in our nation’s history. . . . We must point out how ‘the corrupt system’ is really about a unique and historic brand of wrongdoing by a new class of elitist liberals and political power-seekers.” . . . Sales of *Dutch*, controversial Reagan biography by **Edmund Morris**, plummet, reports *Washington Post*.

Congress



“He extends his remarks, but he never really revises them.”

■ As Rep. **J. C. Watts** (R., Okla.) dispels rumors of retirement by announcing he will seek fourth term in House, Rep. **Ed Pease** (R., Ind.) says he’s quitting, creating 22nd open seat GOP must defend this year, compared to only 6 for Democrats. . . . Rep. **Tom Campbell** (R., Calif.), challenging Sen. **Dianne Feinstein** (D., Calif.): “If I win, God willing, imagine what it means to the Republican party nationwide. A candidate who’s not in the mainstream of Republican elected officials on conservative issues, who does not take PAC money, who voted against the Speaker of the House, who is pro-choice. What it would mean to every timid congressman and senator who knows better, but won’t act on those beliefs for fear of political retribution.” . . . Former Rep. **Tim Penny** (D., Minn.), a Cato Institute fellow, plans run against Sen.

Rod Grams (R.). . . . Minnesota township of St. Augusta considers renaming itself “Ventura.” . . . Puerto Rico will send 59 delegates to Democratic national convention, more than 27 states, and 14 delegates to GOP national convention, as many as or more than 5 states.

■ North Dakota passes Louisiana as state with toughest abortion restrictions, according to National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. . . . Census Bureau projects U.S. population of 571 million at turn of next century, including 131 million senior citizens. Responds **Peter Morrison** of Rand Corporation: “Anyone who claims to be able to predict with accuracy what the population will be 100 years from now is an entertainer, not an analyst.” . . . Kroger’s grocery-store chain announces that issues of *Cosmopolitan* will be concealed under “blinder” racks to obscure magazine’s racy covers, starting in February. . . . America’s worst corporate givers, whose philanthropy aids left-wing causes, are **Freddie Mac** and **Sara Lee**, with **J. P. Morgan**, **Allstate**, and **Pacific Bell** also making top-ten list, says Capital Research Center study. Best givers are **Cigna** and **Dow Chemical**, with **Eli Lilly**, **Wal-Mart**, and **General Motors** earning top-ten slots.

■ China finally acknowledges 1970 earthquake killing more than 15,000 in Yunnan province. . . . Bronze plaque of former KGB head **Yuri Andropov**, removed from façade in Moscow in 1991 at height of anti-Communist sentiments, is restored. . . . Yugoslavian parliament adopts **Slobodan Milosevic**’s budget allocating 73 percent of funds to army. . . . Pakistan Supreme Court rules that “the present financial system based on interest is against the injunctions of Islam.” . . . Canadian Supreme Court considers whether Christian school may require students to sign code forswearing adultery and homosexuality.

■ **Gore**: “America is about fresh starts, and we need a fresh start. We need a new beginning.” . . . Title of book collecting **George W. Bush** speeches: *A Fresh Start for America*. **NR**



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THE WEEK

■ The theme for Al Gore's address to the Democratic convention has finally been set—one of his daughters was just involved in a minor car accident.

■ Maybe the reason George W. Bush injects so much Spanish into Republican presidential debates is that he wants to use a language he's comfortable with.

■ John McCain's tax plan may reasonably be described as Bush Lite. Like Bush, he cuts or eliminates the estate tax, the Social Security earnings test, and the marriage penalty; like Bush, he expands the tax credit for children. He falls short of Bush in cutting marginal tax rates: Where Bush cuts across the board, McCain only cuts rates for some people in the 28 percent tax bracket. McCain does more for individual investors than Bush: The senator would create new family savings accounts and liberalize 401(k)s, education savings accounts, and medical savings accounts. But McCain raises taxes on corporate investment in the name of closing "loopholes." His rhetoric, meanwhile, has been worse than his proposal. He suggests that Bush's tax cut is so large that it endangers Social Security—as though the government could possibly tax its way into solvency for that program. When McCain said that Bush's tax cut was "unfair"—i.e., too generous to the rich—he should have known that no tax cut could be "fair" by the liberal definition he was using. Now that he has unveiled his tax plan, liberal critics are saying that it is almost as biased toward the rich as Bush's. McCain has only himself to blame for that—and for letting Bush get to his right on taxes.

■ Asked during the last Iowa debate whether the town of El Cenizo, Texas, conducts its official business in Spanish, George W. Bush denied it, and said that he was in favor of "English-plus," a policy that, in schools, means that English is the main language of instruction, though other languages can also be used. The standing conservative objection to bilingual policies is that they tend, in the hands of multiculti bureaucrats, to become English-minus. This means that a clear majority-culture direction must be set from the top. When George W. Bush begins his answers to such questions, as he did in the Iowa debate, in smiling, Anglo-accented Spanish, straight out of the Berlitz guide SPANISH FOR PANDERS, it only strengthens the doubts he seeks to allay.

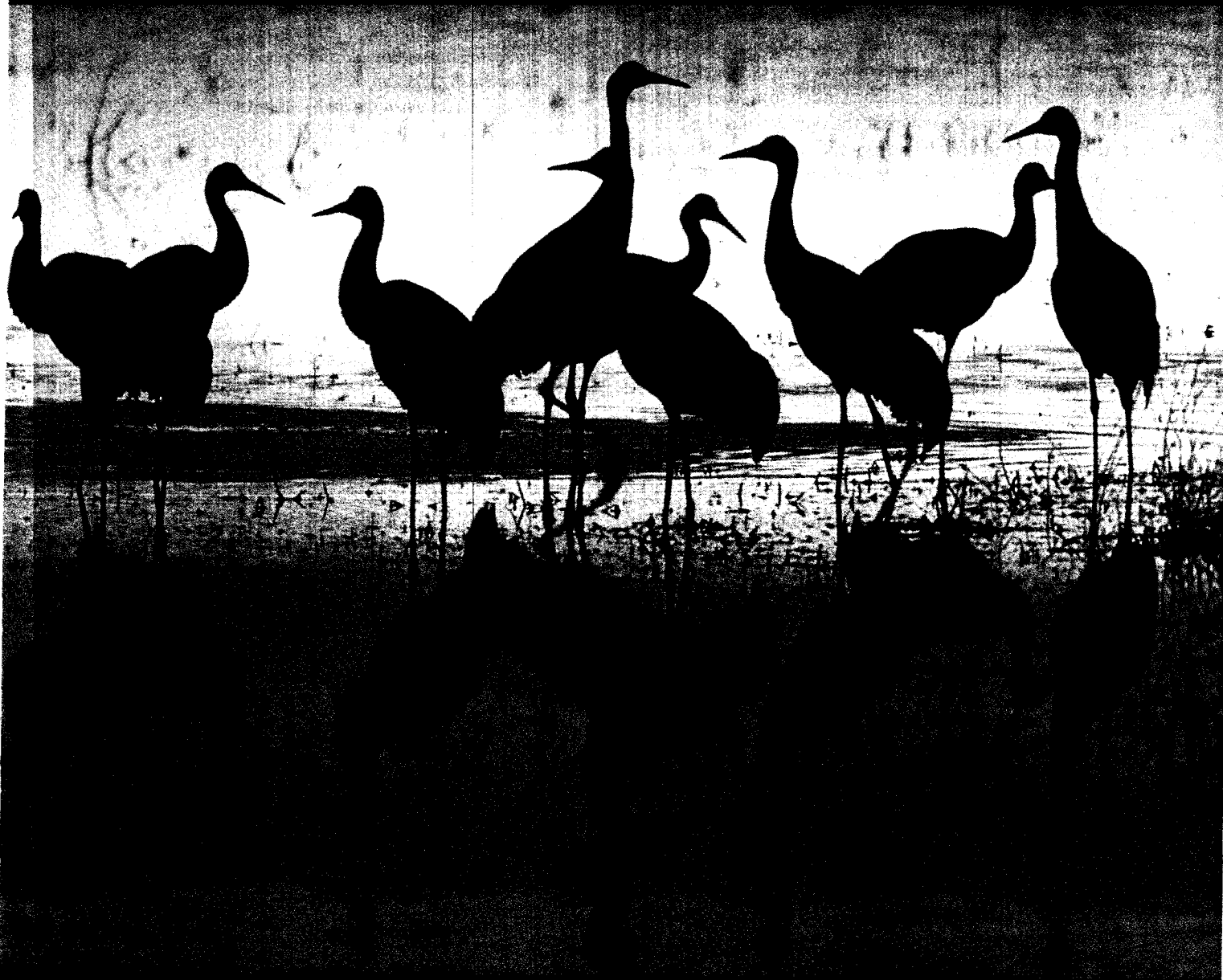
■ Speaking at the Richard Nixon Library, Pat Buchanan gave a sober, and sobering, address on a non-subject of the current campaign: immigration. "At present rates, mass

immigration reinforces ethnic subcultures, reduces the incentives of newcomers to learn English, and extends the life of linguistic ghettos. . . . If we want to assimilate new immigrants—and we have no choice if we are to remain one nation—we must slow down the pace of immigration." Buchanan proposed to reduce entry visas to 300,000 a year, and to tighten border controls: almost the same recommendations of the commission headed by Barbara Jordan five years ago. If someone translates the speech into Spanish, maybe George W. will read it.

■ "I've raised money for crisis-pregnancy centers while my friend Steve Forbes was raising money for Christie Todd Whitman," said Gary Bauer at a Des Moines presidential debate. Now it turns out that cash-strapped crisis-pregnancy centers, which steer women away from abortions, have been raising money for him, too. According to financial-disclosure forms filed last year, Bauer accepted more than \$50,000 in speaking fees from crisis-pregnancy centers in 1998 and the first five months of 1999. He also received more than \$140,000 in fees from pro-life groups, family organizations, churches, and Christian schools—in addition to earning a 1998 salary of \$160,000 at the Family Research Council (plus a ten-year bonus of \$150,000) and "consulting fees" totaling more than \$100,000 from the Campaign for Working Families and American Renewal. Pro-lifers hardly need to take vows of poverty, but pardon us for wondering whether the head of the Family Research Council must be compensated beyond his salary for speaking at a crisis-pregnancy center's annual banquet—even if he is the son of a janitor.

■ The Confederate flag that flies over the South Carolina statehouse was hoisted into the Republican primary. George W. Bush played possum, saying it was a matter for South Carolinians to decide; John McCain tried to see both sides, understanding the dislike many blacks feel for the symbol, as well as the honor many white southerners accord, through it, to their ancestors. Glenn Loury, the ex-conservative sociologist, added a new thought to the debate: Loury claimed he is not angry to see the flag displayed on bumpers or jackets as a symbol of heritage, but added that, when flown from an official flagpole, it is an incongruous validation of treason. The Confederates did not think they were committing treason—they were loyal to their states—but that is one question the war should have settled. The display is hardly an old custom, having been initiated by Governor (now Senator) Ernest Hollings in the early Sixties. Time to rally round this flag elsewhere.

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■ In a missile-defense test on January 18, an interceptor missed its target, for reasons not immediately known. A hit would have meant that the Pentagon had satisfied its minimum technical requirements for field-readiness by 2005. Now the department will give it another try this spring, and the outcome of that test may determine whether President Clinton will permit deployment. The many and tenacious enemies of missile defense, of course, are on the attack. What has become clear over the last year, however, is that the United States doesn't lack the know-how to develop a missile-defense system; engineers can learn much from their supposed failures. The question is whether the country has the political will to understand that mistakes today, as in any scientific process, will lead to successes tomorrow. How dismaying that there are some who don't really want those successes at all.

■ Bill Bradley, Al Gore, now Hillary Clinton: Each has marched to Harlem to join hands with Al Sharpton, the inciter and hater who struggles daily to make New York as ugly as possible. It now seems that all Democratic roads lead through Sharpton. How any Democrat ever again can lecture Republicans on love and compassion is a mystery.

■ In a party-line vote, the Clinton appointees to the Federal Communications Commission launched a campaign against religious broadcasters. Many of these television stations buy noncommercial licenses, which are cheaper than commercial licenses. Under the new rule, however, at least half of the noncommercial stations' programming would have to be "educational, cultural, or instructional"—and religious programming would not count. (The commissioners allow that it can be educational to examine "the apparent dichotomy between science, technology, and established religious tenets." You can relativize or deconstruct religion; you just can't preach it.) Overregulation ought to be resisted, and it ought especially to be resisted when, as here, it impinges on religious freedom. The commissioners should rescind their rule—and while they're at it, they should educate themselves on the etymology of "culture."

■ The federal government has been giving television networks a chance to forego running congressionally funded antidrug advertisements at half-price, in return for inserting antidrug messages in the plots of TV shows. It isn't censorship, exactly, but it is troubling. What other behaviors could Washington induce Hollywood to scorn? Cigarette smoking? Gun owning? Membership in the Branch Davidians? If the war on drugs is a war, then this is what should, and does, happen: All those depictions of sinister Japs and Huns in the Forties were not entirely spontaneous. But the enemies to be combated now are consumers (many of them addicts, many of them not) and criminal marketers, who are a long way short of Tojo and Hitler, and about whose activities there is room for intelligent disagreement. Meanwhile, it is good to see preening media bigs agreeing (no doubt between lines of blow) to exchange creative control for higher ad rates.

ON THE GAY LIMB

*Out there with no proper tail,
Gore hoots like an Alpha male.
Bradley, losing laid-back poise,
Dangles gamely for the boys.
Underneath the spreading tree,
Top brass glare alarmingly.
Bush, McCain, Keyes, et al., make
Bets on when the limb will break.*

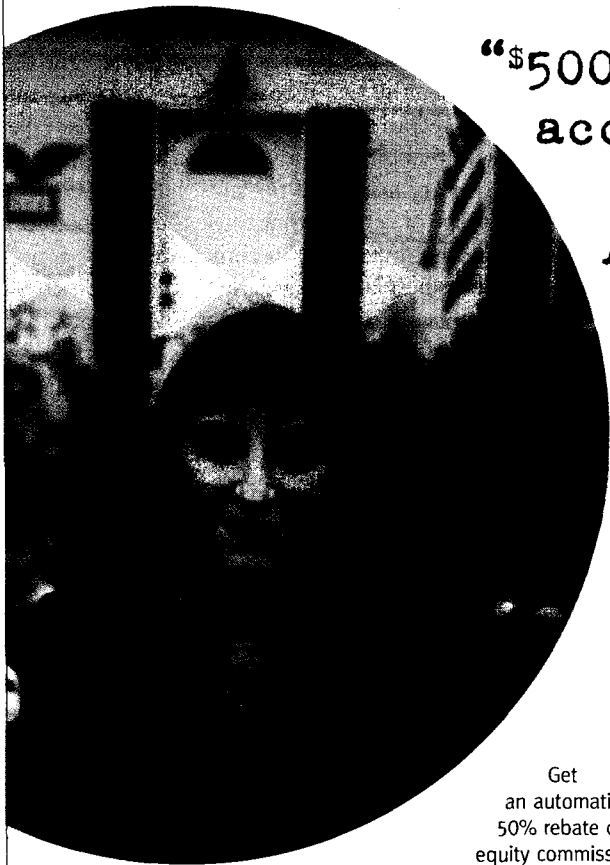
—W. H. VON DREELE



■ Germany did not want women to serve in its armed forces—indeed, its constitution forbids it. Britain did not want to have avowed homosexuals serving in its own armed forces. Polls show that over nine in ten people agreed with the service chiefs that open homosexuality in military units adversely affects morale in peacetime, let alone during combat. But never mind. A German woman has appealed to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg to be allowed to enlist, and some British service men and women have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg against their dismissal on the grounds of homosexuality. In both cases, these courts decided in favor of the plaintiffs. Startling things are happening. European courts now freely overrule national law, and judges have replaced service chiefs in deciding recruitment policy for armed forces. Previous law, expert advice, and public opinion have all proved powerless before political correctness. At the same time, Germany and Britain are taking the lead in setting up a European army. If this army is to subscribe to the current poses and fashions imposed by the European courts, then a politically incorrect enemy will be able one day to instruct it in reality.

■ The seventeenth Karmapa Lama, an important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, fled Tibet for India in an eight-day, 900-mile trek by foot and jeep in the dead of winter. The Karmapa, a 14-year-old boy, felt the Chinese government, which was sponsoring him as a rival to the Dalai Lama, had reneged on promises to let him visit religious figures abroad or to let them meet him at home. After the Karmapa's departure, the Chinese raided his monastery to round up those who had helped him escape. It doesn't matter whether a religion is brand-new (Falun Gong), a foreign import (Christianity), or centuries old (Tibetan Buddhism)—Beijing tolerates it only if it renders unto Caesar everything.

■ NR takes pleased notice of a new play about Max Eastman, performed at Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., on January 15. Eastman, editor of the old *Masses* magazine in 1916 and



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1917, then of *The Liberator* after *The Masses* was suppressed by the Wilson administration, rejected Bolshevism in the 1930s as bureaucratic tyranny and was an important contributor to NATIONAL REVIEW during the first three years of its life. A poet, critic, and philosopher, a disciple of John Dewey, a writer, he parted company with NR over the issue of his atheism. In a useful formulation, WFB decided that a conservative could be an atheist (Hume, Santayana), but not a despoiser of religion, which Eastman was. He remained a good friend of NR until his death in 1969. A man of great charm, he knew "everyone," and his fine autobiography, *Love and Revolution*, shows him to have been a child of the century.

REGULATION

Exit Fees

NOT a week goes by without another major regulatory initiative from the Clinton administration. In late October, the administration proposed new rules to encourage gender parity in college classrooms. In November, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration unveiled new ergonomic standards designed to prevent workplaces from contributing to disorders such as carpal-tunnel syndrome. In December, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that it would tighten emission standards for cars and content standards for fuel; the Federal Aviation Administration said that children under 2 would have to sit in child-safety seats rather than their parents' laps when flying; and the Federal Communications Commission imposed new restrictions on the programming of religious broadcasters (see above). In January, OSHA threatened to regulate the "work conditions" of people who work at home until, after an avalanche of criticism, it backed down by leaving the rules unclear.

Other recently proposed regulations would govern online pharmacies, the privacy of health records, state programs against water pollution, computer hacking, logging in national forests, and the use of land in California and Arizona. (The president recently set aside portions of those states as national monuments.) The regulatory agencies appear to be trying to expand their reach as fast as possible before Clinton's term ends. And that's not to mention the administration's attempts to regulate the tobacco and firearms industries through litigation.

These regulations have drawbacks in common. They are sweeping and intrusive, bringing OSHA into our homes, the FCC into our churches, and the Education Department into college curricula. They are expensive. OSHA estimates that the ergonomic standards will cost Americans \$4.2 billion a year; industry groups say the cost could be fifteen times higher. The price of cars will go up \$100–200 and the price of gas by 2–6 cents per gallon because of the new EPA standards. They are often legally questionable. The car standards were proposed to meet new air-pollution goals. When those goals were thrown out in court, the EPA reworked its calculations so that the standards would appear to be necessary to meet the old goals.

The effectiveness of this regulatory onslaught is questionable. The car standards are supposed to reduce smog, thus giving asthmatic children—as President Clinton put it—the right "to breathe clean, healthy air." Yet over the last ten years, rates of asthma have hit record levels even as air pollution has fallen. The smog-reduction effort is poorly targeted, regulating every vehicle in the country instead of the most affected areas and the small percentage of vehicles that cause the most pollution. The new regulations might, for technical reasons, actually increase smog in some places. Similarly counterproductive is the FAA regulation, which has been repeatedly estimated to be likely to increase child fatalities: Rather than buy extra airline tickets for young children, families will pick the more dangerous option of traveling on the roads.

The child-seat rule was promulgated to eliminate a risk that is so small as to be practically nonexistent. The ergonomics standards also seem unnecessary: If, as OSHA claims, healthier employees would do an additional \$9 billion of work every year, businesses have every incentive to adopt the standards voluntarily. As for water pollution, there is no reason to think that state officials are less concerned than federal ones. The privacy of health records would not be a problem if we adopted free-market reforms enabling individuals to own their health policies: In that case, contracts could specify the conditions for the disclosure of information.

Regulations, unlike plants, grow fastest in the dark. Congress would be better employed in oversight of the regulatory agencies than in passing new laws to add to their workload. More journalistic attention, too, is needed. Most of all, however, we need a president committed to doing the hard work of rolling back the regulatory state. Are there any applications?

RACE

Black/White, as Always

IT'S been a busy season for racism—but when is it not? Just as the people of Constantinople rioted over the Blues and the Greens, rival teams of charioteers, Americans contort themselves over questions of Black and White. It is our reigning paradigm of ritual conflict.

Symbolic systems like Blue/Green and Black/White have a special etiquette. This has been the bane of Atlanta Braves reliever John Rocker, who now faces psychological counseling for his boorish rants about the people who ride New York's subways. Anyone who challenges the reigning pieties so heedlessly probably does have a screw loose, and professional athletics could use a dose of politeness training. But the reaction to Rocker, from a perspective outside the Black/White system, was absurdly inappropriate. Braves president Stan Kasten called the Rocker affair "the most distasteful" he has ever been involved in. This, in a sports culture that includes drug addicts, wife-beaters, fathers of bastards, and cheats. Mr. Kasten has led a very sheltered life.

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but to confer privilege. Jesse Jackson, the ambulance chaser of affirmative action, has been involved in two recent squabbles: He has tried to prevent six high-school kids in Decatur, Illinois, from being suspended for rioting at a football game, and he has protested the firing of Green Bay Packers coach Ray Rhodes. The kids and Rhodes are all black, so Jackson spies racism in their fates (he called the Decatur affair an "international disgrace that deserves world scrutiny"). But surely the more relevant facts are that the students were gang members, battling in packed bleachers, and that Rhodes had compiled a 3–13 record.

Laws sustain the Black/White system, so politics is naturally a main forum for its struggles. Most of the action as the new century begins has been between Al Gore and Bill Bradley, committed, as liberal Democrats, to maximum racial posturing. Their struggles to out-black each other have been intense. Gore's campaign manager, Donna Brazile, is a brawling guttermouth who was fired from the 1988 Dukakis campaign for suggesting that George Bush was having an affair. (How quaint *that* all seems.) Now she has laid down a melanin marker by accusing the GOP of trotting out Colin Powell and J. C. Watts, instead of offering programs to "feed black children." The Gore campaign tried to make nice to Powell, without criticizing Brazile. Sadly, no one—including Powell and Watts—thought to say that a universal "program" of high employment and good schools helps all Americans, white and black. Even more sadly—since Powell and Watts are worthy men—the GOP does trot them out, because the Black/White system requires it.

Evidently feeling a bit left out, Bill Bradley challenged the Clinton administration to issue an executive order against racial profiling, and accused Gore of introducing Willie Horton "into the lexicon" of politics in 1988. (Gore pointed out, in the Democratic primaries, that Gov. Michael Dukakis backed generous furloughs for life prisoners, on one of which Willie Horton, a convicted murderer, raped and terrorized a Maryland couple; Bush supporters ran commercials on the issue in the general election.) No system adequately address-

es all phenomena, and a crucial weakness of the Black/White system is casting crime as a matter of race. People don't want to be impolite, but they want even less to be robbed, raped, and killed. Liberals keep thinking of Willie Horton as an instance of racist campaigning. Normal people see him as an instance of soft-headed justice.

The Black/White system controls the past, as well as the present. America is heading for Presidents' Day, the joint holiday celebrating the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, which were truncated to make room for Martin Luther King Day. King did a great thing with patience and grace, but we are in the Parson Weems phase of his reputation, ignoring all flaws: For example, King is the only non-MD, aside from Samuel Johnson, to always be called "Dr.," even though he plagiarized part of his dissertation. Under the Black/White system, Black figures wear a numinous aura.

The only presidential candidate who forthrightly attacked the Black/White system was Pat Buchanan, who is now asking Lenora Fulani to help him collect signatures on ballot petitions. Whoever becomes emperor, the charioteers will keep racing.

THE CLINTON LEGACY

A Vast Whitewash

THE most astonishing fact in this story may be this one," writes *The New Yorker's* Jeffrey Toobin in *A Vast Conspiracy*, his new book on the Monica Lewinsky affair: "In spite of his consistently reprehensible behavior, Clinton was, by comparison, the good guy in this struggle." Once you read that—it's on page 9—you have pretty much all you need to know about Toobin's book.

What the book is, is an early and energetic attempt to establish President Clinton's misdeeds as trivial, and the impeachment of him, therefore, as illegitimate. Toobin's case is nothing more than an extended version of the White House defense. The president was a middle-aged man caught in an embarrassing affair with a young woman. Like any man in such a situation, he was desperate to avoid the shame of public exposure. But unlike any man, Clinton had political enemies who would stop at nothing in their drive to bring him down. Faced with a zealous and sex-obsessed prosecutor, the president lied about his dalliance. Not real admirable, but not impeachable either.

What gets in the way of the Clinton-Toobin view, of course, is the facts. The main fault of *A Vast Conspiracy* is that its author, determined to portray the Starr investigation as a sexual inquisition, grossly underplays the evidence of the president's obstruction of justice. What about Clinton's scheme to have Lewinsky lie under oath to protect him? What about the extraordinary attention Vernon Jordan paid to Lewinsky's job search? What about the president's "We were never alone, right?" witness-tampering session with Betty Currie? And what about the gifts from Clinton to Lewinsky

PUTIN, RISING

*Maturing in the KGB
Amidst the muffled screams,
He's gotten Madeleine upset
And soured Sandy's dreams.
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Is every Baltic state.*

—W. H. VON DREELE



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that somehow ended up hidden under Currie's bed? All of this is given short shrift by Toobin. He's too smart to ignore them, but not smart—or honest—enough to explain them.

One of the more revealing moments in *A Vast Conspiracy* occurs just after the release of the Starr Report, when House Democratic counsel Abbe Lowell briefed minority leader Richard Gephardt on the evidence. On the question of whether the president committed perjury in the Paula Jones deposition, Lowell said simply, "No question that he lied." Perjury before the grand jury was a "closer call." "The rest of it is not there," Lowell concluded. "Vernon probably lied through his teeth about what he knew, but . . ."

Who cared if Clinton was guilty? The White House defense was good enough for the Democrats, and it's good enough for Toobin.

Said Toobin recently, "One of the most damning things I learned about Bill Clinton in writing this book is that even his own friends said to me, 'You know, if that dress never came out, if that dress didn't exist with the DNA on it that was dispositive proof, he wouldn't be admitting the affair to this day.'" It shouldn't have taken a book project to figure that out. And the rest of us need not succumb to the moral, legal, and now historical slumber in which the likes of Jeffrey Toobin are happily dreaming.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I was quite distressed to see the F-word spelled out in full in the Dec. 6 issue of NR, particularly in a section authored by you. In that same issue, NR used asterisks in a quote containing the much more tame, yet still offensive S-word. I can accept the asterisks. However, I have a real problem with having my nose rubbed in the full spelling. Thanks a lot for assisting the liberal media in making profanity acceptable.

This morning I cancelled my subscription. That is unfortunate for both of us, as I generally read NR cover to cover and relied on it for political and social news concerning the U.S. But I am voting with my feet.

Yours truly,
Hugh A. Ramolla
Burlington, Ont.

Dear Mr. Ramolla: I understand your point of view and am in general governed by the same protocols you observe. But to have eliminated the full word in that exact situation, quoting the president of Panama, would have been the equivalent of bowdlerizing the word in a medical dictionary. The story absolutely hung on it. To have censored it would have required jettisoning the whole piece, and I don't think that would have been wise, which is a reason that I included it in my published book in the first place. I am sorry you'll be without NR, and admonish you to cancel all of cable television, where the word is used routinely.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Some years ago, on *Firing Line*, I heard you use a German word that I have since forgotten. It refers to an overwhelming feeling that there is impending doom hovering just below the horizon, and, since things are going so well, it will surely hit! Do you have any idea what I'm talking about? It would be a blessing to have this word back in my vocabulary!

Sincerely,
Marion D. Linde
Tupelo, Miss.

Dear Mrs. Linde: I know only about three German words, the nearest to what you describe being *Weltschmerz*, which is the sorrow that one feels from the world's evils. Any use?

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: My grandsons subscribe to a magazine called *Sports Illustrated for Kids*. It seems to me that their time would better be spent reading about current events. One is never too young to get the "right" information. Heaven knows the leftward slant is readily available in most publications aimed at the younger generation.

So how about an NR for kids? It would, after all, be "doing something for the children." Florence King would love the idea!

I have a feeling that subscribers to NR would prefer that their children and grandchildren read about more than today's sports "heroes" and

would consider such a periodical a valuable gift.

Sincerely,
Robert E. McKenna
Atlantic Beach, Fla.

Dear Mr. McKenna: I don't know . . . The Katzenjammer Kids and Dick Tracy are healthier reading than the bumper-sticker politics held out for Mum and Dad. The key is to superintend the passage of young minds from Harry Potter to NATIONAL REVIEW.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I have noticed that in obituaries, and elsewhere, newspapers will write: "Mr. Jones received a Bachelor's degree from Brandeis and a Master's degree from Harvard." I have been wondering whether the use of the possessive in the above instance is correct. Shouldn't it be that the person received "a Bachelor degree from Brandeis and a Master degree from Harvard"? Or, "a Bachelors degree"?

Laurence T. May Jr.
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Mr. May: I don't know the answer to that one. Strict construction certainly bears you out that the possessive serves no purpose. After all, no one would think it odd to write that Mr. Jones received a B.A. from Brandeis and an M.A. from Harvard. On the other hand, the ear cries out for it in the sentence you cite. Usage, rex.

Cordially,

—WFB

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Iowa Stubborn

The trouble with the caucus

GARY GEIPEL

IOWA'S precinct caucuses and a Mafia protection racket: The comparison is irresistible. In both cases, participation is almost always mandatory, there are no real benefits, large sums of money are wasted, and everyone keeps his mouth shut because too many thugs have a piece of the action.

Let's carry the analogy forward: It's time for someone to start singing to the cops about Iowa, because too many people are getting hurt.

Texas governor George W. Bush, this year's Iowa champion, should pray that the caucuses are meaningless, because if they have any meaning at all, it's as a predictor of ultimate defeat. No Republican winner of the Iowa caucuses has ever gone on to win the White House. In fact, it's been 20 years since even a second-place GOP finisher in Iowa, Ronald Reagan, went on to capture the real prize.

The inaccuracy of the Iowa barometer could be forgiven if the three great myths of the caucuses stood up to examination. First, we are led to believe, Iowa is a great political test market: a cross-section of Americans well suited to choosing a nominee. Second, Iowans are the nation's political control group. They make their decisions on the basis of personal encounters with the candidates—immune to media manipulation, advertisements, and spin-doctoring. Third, Iowa is the poor candidate's heaven, a place where an aspiring president willing to sleep in private homes and eat in lots of diners can rise to the top.

Those three myths are not just flawed, they are dead-wrong.

It is difficult to imagine a state less representative of the contemporary U.S. electorate than Iowa. In part, this is to Iowa's credit. Its people remain largely unfamiliar with violent crime, failing



Steve Forbes and George W. Bush by Roman Genn

schools, urban congestion, or large-scale poverty. However—owing to the state's unusual demography and economic structure—Iowans also remain largely unfamiliar with immigration, cultural diversity, high-tech industry, foreign investment, or rapid growth.

Iowa's political culture, too, is a world unto itself. The rest of the nation perceives Iowa as "moderate," but that is true only as a mathematical average. In practice, Iowa does not produce broad-based centrists so much as it swings between opposites. Thus, the popular 16-year governorship of farm-boy conservative Terry Branstad gave way seamlessly last year to the governorship of liberal trial lawyer Tom Vilsack; and the recent mayoral race in Cedar Rapids, the state's second-largest city, pitted a wealthy liberal with a gay-rights agenda against a fundamentalist preacher.

Even if most Iowans turned out for the caucuses, therefore, the caucuses would not resemble a meaningful cross-section of America—but most Iowans do not turn out for the caucuses. In a good year,

15 percent of Iowa's registered Republicans—no more than 100,000 people—attend a caucus. These folks, called "likely caucus-goers" by pollsters, are an even less meaningful sub-sample of an already eccentric whole.

Most caucus-going Republicans fall into one of two groups. There is the old-guard, don't-rock-the-boat group, for whom the choice to become a Republican was like the choice of Kiwanis over Rotary—something you did because that's what your dad did, or because that's the kind of neighborhood you live in. And then there is the new-guard, let's-swamp-the-boat group, who chose Republicanism as a tactical convenience in pursuit of particular agendas (most frequently, ending abortion and protecting U.S. sovereignty). Newcomers who foolishly view the Republican party as a real-world coalition of Americans united to advance a broad-based political agenda, generally attend one county GOP meeting in Iowa—and then run away screaming, never to be seen again.

It is therefore no surprise that Iowa always favors two kinds of candidate. The old guard invariably echoes the "safe choice" of the national GOP establishment, as long as the chosen one has made the appropriate bows to Iowa's first-in-the-nation status: George W. in 2000, Bob Dole in 1996, and the first George Bush in 1980. (This Bush's third-place showing in 1988 was the exception that proved the rule—a slap on the wrist because he appeared to take Iowa for granted.)

The new guard in Iowa, which made its first big stand in the 1988 GOP caucuses, believes that it has the power to change the very nature of politics. This group rewards the candidates who—unblemished by any success of their own at the ballot box—pander to the new guard's indifference to party unity, outreach, incrementalism, and other means of electing people and advancing causes.

Iowa saves its greatest brutality for movement conservatives who have made the mistake of getting themselves elected somewhere and engaging in the real work of government. Just ask Jack Kemp, Phil Gramm, and Dan Quayle. They lacked the blessing of the media

Mr. Geipel was Iowa communications director for the Quayle 2000 campaign.

and the GOP establishment. They were not willing to narrow-cast themselves for the single-issue activists. So they found almost no "likely caucus-goers" to punch their tickets. The most frequent concern voiced about Quayle by Iowa's new-guard activists was not his supposed "image problem," but his decision in 1997 to campaign for New Jersey Republican Christine Todd Whitman—*bête noire* of pro-life activists—in her reelection bid against an equally pro-abortion Democrat.

As to the second myth—the supposed virtues of one-on-one campaigning—operatives in Iowa all know, but rarely admit, that candidate appearances in the state are perfunctory exercises. A candidate must log a certain number of "Iowa days" to prove that he is "taking Iowa seriously." The regulars show up, get a

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**The Iowa Racket has all
but shut down the chances
of conservative statesmen to
climb the electoral ladder.**

■

new photo to add to their collections, eat free food, and then go home to follow the cues passed out by the news media, the TV commercials, and the activist leaders who twist arms. Consider: Gov. Bush led every Iowa poll long before setting foot in the state. His few visits neither helped nor hurt that standing. Meanwhile, hapless Lamar Alexander toured all of the state's 99 counties to good reviews, and he got the back of Iowa's hand.

We're left, finally, with the myth of Iowa as the poor candidate's heaven. If Jimmy Carter created that myth in 1976, George W. Bush and Steve Forbes finally smashed it at last August's straw poll in Ames. The Iowa GOP made a small fortune, as the various presidential campaigns supplied the food, entertainment, and transportation; bought all the tickets that Iowans needed to cast their "votes"; and even cleaned up the mess afterwards.

The final vote counts in Ames paralleled candidate expenditures perfectly. Bush and Forbes spent seven figures on the event; they placed first and second. Elizabeth Dole and Gary Bauer spent six figures; they placed third and fourth.

The others spent five figures; they placed further back. At best, then, Iowa has become yet another echo of how much money a candidate has raised.

So let's review what the Iowa Racket has accomplished for the GOP: It has led to the bizarre proliferation of political novices in the presidential field. It has all but shut down the chances of conservative statesmen to climb the electoral ladder. It has heightened the importance of early money, making it even more difficult for a good candidate to introduce himself. It produces victors who can't win. So why do we keep going back for more?

That's where the thugs with a piece of the action come in. Iowa's own political leaders spread the mythology and play hardball with anyone who won't buy it (mention to Iowa GOP bosses the name of John McCain, the lone Iowa holdout during this cycle, and prepare to wipe the venom off your suit). Their money and influence is at stake. They get consulting fees and retainers, while even the lowliest statehouse candidates in Iowa can count on fat PAC donations from presidential candidates they pretend to consider.

Some lower-level activists sense that the caucuses do more harm than good in Iowa politics, creating feuds and cliques that hinder the GOP's local effectiveness. But most want nothing to interfere with the unnatural attention they receive from would-be presidents ("Dan's Christmas card was nice, but Steve phoned me for the holidays").

Most home-grown Iowa political reporters know what's really going on, but the Great Mentioners in Des Moines toe the line to keep alive their CNN guest shots and other national exposure (no single institution has more at stake in the caucuses than the *Des Moines Register*). Parachuting national reporters rarely grasp the sheer fraudulence of the caucuses. Some have questioned the significance of the straw poll, but they balance that concern against the need for some drama to cover in the off year. Besides, how many national political reporters will agonize over a tradition that weakens the GOP?

Every once in a while, a naïve upstart will cry foul, but then bad things start happening to him. Can someone get me a slot in the Witness Protection Program?

NR

■ CAMPAIGN 2000 II ■

La Donna Is Catastrophe

Gore's ghastly Brazile

JOHN J. MILLER

DONNA BRAZILE displays a sack of potting soil in her office at Gore campaign headquarters. "This is the only dirt in this campaign," she likes to tell visitors. "I'm going to spread joy and good news about Al Gore, a great fighter and a proven leader. I can talk about him all day."

She's certainly been doing a lot of talking lately, and not just about Gore. Brazile, who is Gore's campaign manager, recently said Republicans would "rather take pictures with black children than feed them." She singled out the GOP's two most prominent African Americans for special abuse: "The Republicans bring out Colin Powell and J. C. Watts because they have no program, no policy. . . . They have no love and no joy."

A little bag of dirt, it appears, goes a long way. The 40-year-old Brazile has become one of Gore's chief liabilities since becoming his campaign manager in October. She has been a figure of almost nonstop controversy thanks to a string of witless comments, often focused on racial grievances. Whenever Brazile opens her mouth, it seems, something toxic spills out. Gore's handlers run a never-ending clean-up operation in her wake, and the candidate himself is often sucked into the mess. It's hard not to think that Gore has had second and third thoughts about whether he should have promoted her in the first place.

Gore, however, will never allow these thoughts to become actions. Brazile may not be the first black person to head a major presidential campaign—Ken Blackwell is chairman for Steve Forbes—but she's definitely the first black woman to serve as a top candidate's campaign manager. And for that reason, the Gore team cannot let her

fail; the vice president will most assuredly not permit himself to become the first candidate to fire or demote a black campaign manager.

And make no mistake: Brazile's race is key. When Gore announced her promotion, he didn't do it at a routine press event in Washington or New Hampshire, as might be expected. He did it in front of a group of black leaders at a Nashville restaurant. Brazile's function is to symbolize the Gore campaign as much as run it.

That's not to say Brazile doesn't know her way around a campaign trail. In a 1989 interview, she called herself "a Democrat who was a former Republican when I was growing up." (In 1979, she worked for David Treen, a Republican, who ran for—and won—the governorship.) Yet she was apparently active in Democratic politics before she could even vote, volunteering in behalf of the Carter-Mondale ticket in her home state of Louisiana in 1976. After being graduated from college, she got involved in liberal civil-rights causes and joined Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign. In 1988, she worked for Dick Gephardt, and is widely credited in Democratic circles with helping him win the Iowa caucuses. Later, the Michael Dukakis campaign absorbed her, but spat her out shortly before the election when, in front of scribbling reporters, she called George Bush a racist and suggested he was an adulterer. "The American people have every right to know if Barbara Bush will share that bed with him in the White House," she said. Dukakis fired her and apologized to his opponent.

In 1990, she resurfaced as chief of staff to Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's delegate to Congress. Brazile occasionally worked on Democratic campaigns, but not at the presidential level. In 1998, she ran a project for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee to increase black turnout—a smashing success, by all accounts, and partly responsible for the Democrats' unexpected gains in the House that year. President Clinton even sent her a note of thanks for her efforts; to this day, it remains in a file that she keeps with her at all times.

In truth, Brazile isn't managing the Gore campaign, and she doesn't even have a particularly prominent role in determining Gore's strategy. She can

explain it well enough—win in Iowa, do well in New Hampshire, make Bill Bradley defend his base in the Northeast, and crush him in the South—but she's not calling those shots. That job belongs to campaign chairman Tony Coelho. Media gurus Carter Eskew and Bob Shrum are also considered more influential. "Donna is great at getting out the vote and running phone banks," says one Gore insider. "But she's not in charge. She's campaign manager in name only." Adds Robert Borosage, a Democratic activist and co-director of the Campaign for America's Future: "It would not be accurate to call her a figurehead, but it's important to remember that job titles are all very fungible in the era of media."

And it's this job title—campaign manager—that has caused Gore so

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**Gore will assuredly not permit
himself to become the first
candidate to fire or demote a
black campaign manager.**

■

many headaches. When Brazile told the *Washington Post* in November that she wouldn't allow herself to be pushed around by the "white boys," she helpfully explained, "A white-boy attitude is 'I must exclude, denigrate, and leave behind.'" She also said that in the world of politics, a woman must choose between being a "bitch" (i.e., an activist) and a "whore" (i.e., a paid consultant). "I chose bitch," she said.

Comments like these wouldn't amount to much if they were made by, say, a Gore lackey in the envelope-stuffing department. A reporter probably wouldn't even bother to write them down. But when they come from the mouth of someone called campaign manager, heads start to turn.

And that's precisely what happened among Democrats when Brazile delivered this bit of political analysis: "The four pillars of the Democratic party are African Americans, labor, women, and what I call other ethnic minorities," she said in November. "The emerging constituencies are environmentalists, gays and lesbians, and those with physical disabilities."

"New Democrats" gnashed their teeth at hearing these words. "This 'base constituency group' strategy was central to the failed Democratic presidential campaigns of the 1980s," said the Democratic Leadership Council in a weekly memo. Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, head of the DLC, took to the airwaves and essentially asked Gore to repudiate his campaign manager's assertion. And so Gore himself entered damage-control mode: "I am very conscious of the fact that independents hold the balance of power in the general election and the majority of primary contests, including New Hampshire," he told *USA Today*. "It's hardly a revelation to say that in Democratic primaries, you're going to concentrate on getting a good turnout among [those Democrats who] traditionally turn out in larger numbers."

Brazile wound up making tail-between-the-legs phone calls to both Lieberman and Al From, the DLC's president.

A few weeks later, Brazile uttered her remark about blacks and Republicans. She might have gotten away with it—the mainstream media rarely report Democratic race-baiting—had she not mentioned Powell. The comment incited him. He waited for Gore to call with an explanation. When none came, he sent a blistering letter to the vice president. "Let's not start the new century by playing the polarizing 'race card,'" he wrote. "I... help feed, educate, and spiritually nourish all of America's children, black and white, and not just for a photo op. And I do so as a Republican."

The Powell flap was news: The retired general, who previously had not been active in the presidential race, had become energized. Gore and Brazile both phoned him with conciliatory messages and praised him publicly as an American hero. But the episode—combined with Gore's recent statements about gays in the military and litmus tests for the joint chiefs of staff—may convince Powell to become more involved in this year's campaign than he had once planned. Gore can't like that.

On the *Today* show on January 10, Katie Couric asked Gore about the Powell fracas. "I regretted the way he heard Donna's comments," said the vice president, as if Powell were a poor listener. "She does a fantastic job."

Of course she does.

NR

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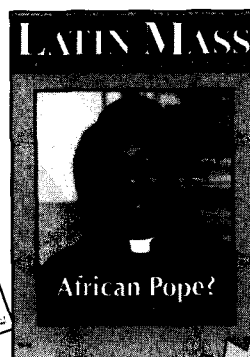
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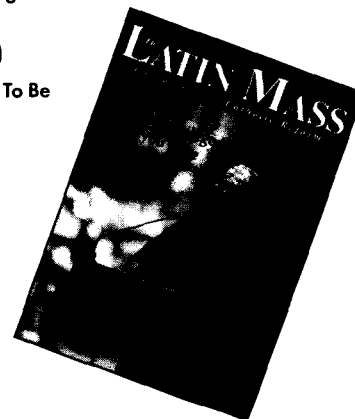
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■ THE NATION ■

Agony over Elián

The anti-anti-Communists are back

KATE O'BEIRNE

THE last time attorney general Janet Reno urged hasty action because of her concern for the well-being of children, the Branch Davidians' compound was incinerated. In the case of Elián Gonzalez, a similar dynamic may be at work. Reno has declared that a Florida judge's grant of emergency custody to Elián's great-uncle "has no force or effect" because "this little boy has been through so much . . . It is therefore imperative that all of us do what we can to resolve his case as soon as possible." Reno appears to be quite eager to see the pint-sized refugee returned to a tyrant.

She's not the only one having problems with this flap. Ever since Elián was found lashed to an inner tube in the waters off Florida—having survived an escape from Cuba that took the life of his mother and ten others—the dispute over his future has had liberals championing the rights of a father who, as a subject of the Cuban regime, has none, and some conservatives arguing for the right of a 6-year-old to determine his own fate.

The liberals have the worse part of the bargain. Conservatives, in a sense, are only taking a position consistent with their beliefs of the last 40 years. Anti-Communists are loath to see the boy condemned to life in a dictatorship. The anti-anti-Communists, however, are rallying to Castro's regime.

The Clinton administration accuses Republicans of playing Cold War politics to curry favor with Cuban Americans. But the fact remains that the unilateral decision to return the boy to Cuba breaks with precedent—and is the direct result of Fidel Castro's intimidation.

The administration's insistence that the case is strictly a federal matter under

the jurisdiction of the Immigration and Naturalization Service is a reversal of its initial position. On December 1, a few days after Elián's rescue, the INS recognized that "the issue of legal custody must be decided by [the] state court." Cuba had asked the American mission to return the boy, but the State Department explained that the federal government would defer to the Florida courts, as they take precedence in custody disputes.

On December 5, Castro demanded that Elián be returned within 72 hours—or else mass demonstrations would take place, just as negotiations were about to begin on the future of the migration accords (under which the Cuban government vows to prevent a flood of illegal departures). Following Castro's threat—according to Richard Nuccio, President Clinton's former adviser on Cuba—the State Department urged the INS to reconsider its jurisdiction.

Within 48 hours of Castro's ultimatum, the State Department announced that INS regulations "recognize the right of a parent to assert parental interests in an immigration proceeding. The INS will be in contact with Mr. Gonzalez in the near future . . ." The statement also noted that the U.S. remained committed to the migration accords.

Once Castro made it clear that he wanted Elián back, the dictator's old friends in the U.S. took up his demand. Ramsey Clark joined a protest at the INS office in New York City, and the former general secretary of the National Council of Churches hurried to Cuba to vouch for the fitness and sincerity of Elián's father.

Others urging the INS to hurry Elián back to Cuba would rather that he suffered scarcity than be "spoiled" by the riches of capitalism. The *Washington Post's* Mary McGrory criticizes the toys and trips the motherless child is enjoying and frets that Elián is in danger of becoming "the permanent kid in a candy store." That certainly won't happen if he is

returned to Cuba, where children over age 6 are forbidden to drink rationed milk.

Also in the *Washington Post*, Judy Mann regrets that the case provides "a marvelous opportunity for anti-Communists to drag out their dreary old Cold War rhetoric." In *USA Today*, Jill Nelson sees "cultural imperialism" in the claim that Elián would have a better life in America. Particular hostility is directed toward Cuban Americans, the only aggrieved minority group told by liberals to "get over it." Even Cuba's charge that Elián's fate cannot be left in the hands of "corrupt judges" is echoed by the dictator's friends. McGrory notes that the "Cubans of Miami" elected the judge who awarded temporary custody, so "she is, emotionally, one of them."

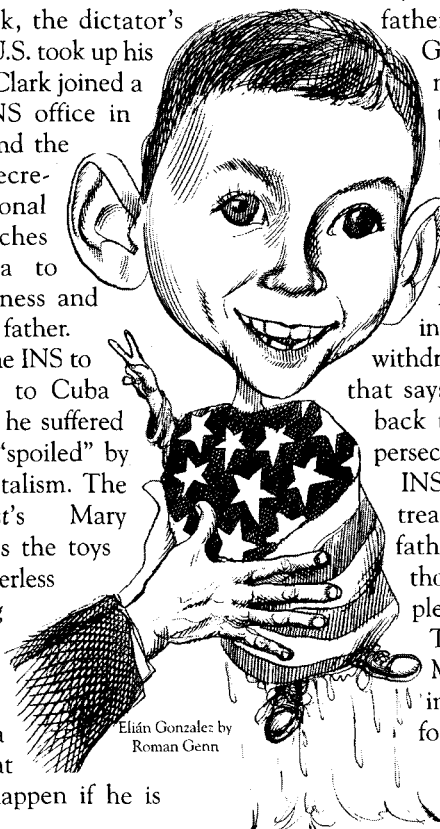
To further discredit the judge, critics raised a conflict-of-interest charge because an unpaid spokesman for Elián's Miami relatives was a paid consultant on the judge's 1998 campaign. But under Florida's code, there is no obligation to disclose a prior relationship with an individual who is not an attorney or party involved in the pending case.

The state judge awarded temporary custody to a great-uncle, but the INS will not defer to the state court; it has determined, instead, that only the boy's father can act in his behalf.

Grover Joseph Rees, a former general counsel at the INS, recognizes that the agency is not bound by the state-court judgment, but believes that the INS acted improperly in the case: "The INS abused its discretion in letting someone in Cuba withdraw an asylum application that says, please don't send me back to Cuba because I'll be persecuted."

INS officials, like the media, treat interviews with Elián's father, Juan Gonzalez, as though he were in Canada pleading for his son's return.

The INS concluded that Mr. Gonzalez was expressing his "true wishes" and found nothing that would call his parental rights into question. Here,



the INS is forgetting Cuban law. Under the Code of the Child, the state exercises parental rights and demands that all persons coming in contact with a child develop his "Communist personality."

Mr. Gonzalez's Miami relatives maintain that he knew and approved of his former wife's plan to flee with their son, and it is rumored that Mr. Gonzalez has twice applied for an immigrant visa for the U.S. The truth of these assertions can't be determined in a unilateral INS administrative proceeding. In an adversarial hearing, with all sides represented, Elián's relatives would have a chance to prove their claims about his father's true intentions.

The Justice Department wants to avoid the spectacle of federal marshals prying Elián's fingers off a Big Wheel to be dragged to the nearest airport. That's why it should follow precedent—and defer to the state court for a determination of custody that Elián's relatives have pledged to abide by. One of the Cold War's last refugees should have his day in court.

NR

■ IDEOLOGY ■

Of All the Dictators . . .

Why the Left singles out Pinochet

ANTHONY DANIELS

WHEN the British home secretary, Jack Straw, announced that he was "minded" (as he so modestly put it) to allow Gen. Augusto Pinochet to return to Chile on the grounds of ill health, he was admitting—whether he intended it or not—that the whole affair had been political from the first. Pinochet's detention had never been, as the Blair government tried to pretend, a question of justice being done though

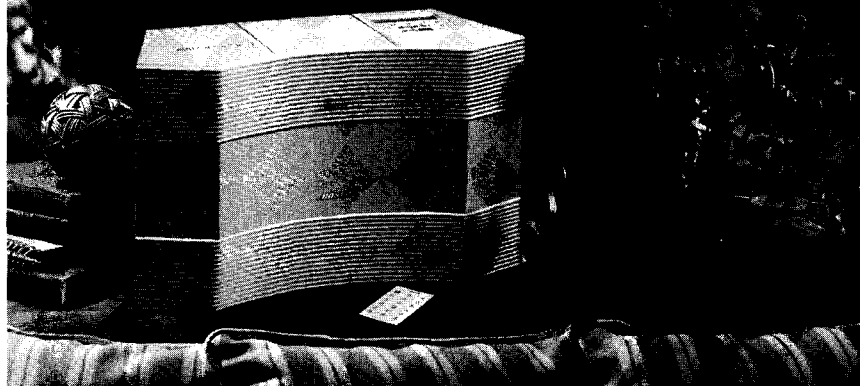
the heavens fell. On the contrary, it was a sordid and perfidious political maneuver calculated to gain the applause of the government's leftist critics and divert their attention from its economic conservatism.

The affair has been rich in ironies. The government has throughout maintained friendly relations with dictators much bloodthirstier than Pinochet. A British judge pontificating on the case "forgot" to mention his close personal association with Amnesty International, an organization that was campaigning at the time for the general's extradition. Pinochet received support from an unexpected source, Fidel Castro, who recalled, perhaps, the asylum granted to Erich Honecker in the general's own Chile, and who might one day be in need of similar services himself. At the very least, Pinochet's arrest was unlikely to encourage the early retirement of present and future dictators. The country from which

Mr. Daniels, author of *Utopias Elsewhere*, is a doctor in England.

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the extradition request issued—Spain—had not put a single official of its own recent (and much longer-lasting) dictatorship on trial. Good liberals, who normally decried as barbaric the principle of punishment, and saw in criminals only the victims of society, bayed for the general's blood in advance of any judicial proceedings. There were no legalistic scruples about the proof required of Pinochet's personal responsibility for what occurred during his regime. And while it held the general captive, Britain released scores of convicted terrorists who had committed crimes on its own soil, and refused to prosecute a woman who had for years been an atomic spy for the Soviets and who was only three years older than the general. Since he was a declared friend of Britain, it began to look as if his arrest were a typical act of modern British self-hatred as well as perfidy.

But there is a further puzzle in the whole affair: Why is Pinochet so much the most hated (at least by intellectuals) of all dictators of the second half of the 20th century? Why should he alone have suffered the humiliating fate of arrest and detention in a foreign country, at the behest of yet another foreign country? After all, in the bestiary of the past century, he was but a minor and insignificant creature, even if (as is unlikely) he were personally responsible for every cruelty committed in Chile while he was dictator. When South Africa recently refused to extradite the former Ethiopian ruler Mengistu back to his homeland, there was not a peep of protest, though all of Pinochet's crimes could have been fitted into an afternoon of Mengistu's rule, and the tortures practiced in Chile were but therapeutic procedures by comparison with what was done in Ethiopia. Even among the conservative Latin American military dictators, Pinochet was not the worst: For every liberal intellectual who froths at the mention of his name, how many are there who have even heard of Lucas Garcia of Guatemala, for example? And the generals of the Argentinean junta, whose record was certainly no better than Pinochet's, are not hated—except in Argentina—with anything like the same venom. Why not?

There is an obvious explanation: Alone of the dictators, Pinochet was stunningly successful. He found his

country an economic disaster and left it a beacon whose light shone well beyond the confines of Latin America. It drew students of success from all over the world. It was more prosperous than it had been in all its previous existence.

Worse still, Pinochet had effected this change by following—more or less, with one or two detours en route—policies that were exactly the opposite of those that liberal intellectuals had been advocating for decades, and which arrogated to themselves roles of primary importance. He proved by his country's success that there was no such thing as imperialism holding Third World countries back: that their manacles were largely self-forged, and that the best thing governments of such countries could do for their economic welfare was to get out of the way. A mere army general—of the kind usually contemptuously referred to as a gorilla (as distinct from the much-admired *guerrilla*)—had achieved in a few years what untold numbers of liberal intellectuals had been unable to achieve anywhere in the world over much longer periods.

This was a terrible wound to the liberal intellectuals' self-regard. If they weren't needed for Third World solidarity committees, what were they needed for? Indeed, Pinochet's regime had proved not only that such intellectuals had no providential role to play in the salvation of Third World countries—such as they expected to play while Allende ruled Chile—but that they represented an obstacle to be overcome on the path to economic development. Pinochet was thus an existential reproach to them.

Had his regime confined itself to torturing and "disappearing" its opponents while the country staggered from economic crisis to economic crisis, Pinochet would have been the object of mild theoretical reproach, but not of the strident and emotional obloquy that leads to demonstrations outside embassies. It was his achievements, not his faults, that were so hated.

None of this applies, of course, to Chileans who hate Pinochet because a relative, friend, or acquaintance was tortured or disappeared during his rule. It surely takes little imagination to see why they would hate him.

But if you read leftist literature on

Chile (by no means a pleasure from the purely literary point of view), you will still never find an admission that the Left had any blameworthy part in Pinochet's rise to power. It is never admitted that Allende openly espoused and admired an ideology that had by then not only suppressed all manifestations of freedom and prevented prosperity over a third of the globe's land surface, but had killed scores of millions; or that his tactics, to use constitutional means to achieve unconstitutional ends, uncannily resembled Hitler's.

To warm up the embers of Jack Straw's student activism, the British taxpayer has now been landed with a bill of approximately \$24 million. It is a lot to pay for the shallow gratification of a shallow man. **NR**

■ EDUCATION ■

X-Percent Plans

After preferences, more
race games

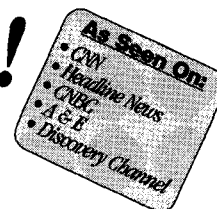
SHELBY STEELE

WE are a society exhausted and polarized by the affirmative-action impasse. So it was not surprising to see excitement over Florida governor Jeb Bush's new best-of-both-worlds plan to have diversity in Florida's state universities without racial preferences. In place of the usual preferences, Bush proposes to make the top 20 percent of graduates in each Florida high school eligible for university admission. This, he argues, may bring in even more minorities than the current regime of preferences. In Texas, where racial preferences were eliminated by court decision, the University of Texas already claims some

Mr. Steele's most recent book is *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America*. He is a research fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution.

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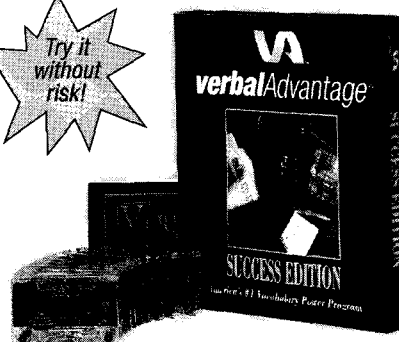
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success with a 10 percent plan implemented last year. In California, despite a system-wide increase in minority enrollments after Proposition 209 ended preferences in that state, the University of California still hopes an upcoming 4 percent plan will bring more minorities into its two most selective campuses, Berkeley and UCLA. So, do "X-percent" plans, with their promise of minority inclusion without racial preferences, offer the longed-for relief from our withering affirmative-action debate?

Sadly, I think not. Some problems with these plans are immediately obvious. Under racial preferences, lower academic standards were effectively isolated to minorities, so that standards elsewhere were not much affected. But X-percent plans spread lowered standards far past the minority track where low grade-point averages and high dropout rates have long been tolerated. These plans lower the academic norm of the entire student body so that schools must come down in standards simply to meet their students. The University of Texas has already had to come up with remedial classes for pre-med students with SAT scores as much as 200 points below the university average. When competitive admissions give way to guaranteed percentages, great universities—as the famous decline of CCNY after open enrollments makes clear—slide into mediocrity. Good faculty go elsewhere. Research money follows. Graduates become less competitive. Funding declines.

This diminishes precisely the first-rate state universities that have historically offered superb educations to hard-working students from modest backgrounds. And, over time, these plans will be yet another pressure to relegate equality to the public sector and excellence to the private sector. This could extend to universities the sort of class divide and white flight that has already taken hold in K-12 education. Unencumbered by a percent requirement, private universities and colleges could simply continue to maintain competitive admissions for whites and Asians by targeting only blacks and Hispanics for lowered standards. This capacity to isolate (or seem to isolate) academic mediocrity strictly to a minority track would give even second- and third-tier private institutions a great advantage over their public competitors.

All of this raises a timeless question: Must equality always come at the expense of excellence? My answer is no. I believe it is quite possible to have racial equality without destroying our public institutions. Moreover, this can be an equality not just of rights but also of performance levels. This does not happen now because we have pursued equality in education more by engineering unequals into institutions than by insisting on their development to parity with others. We have conceived of equality as mere "inclusion" rather than as an equality of skills between the races.

And this engineering works by one all-important mechanism: a tolerance for levels of academic mediocrity in blacks and Hispanics that are rarely tolerated in whites and Asians. The racial preference is simply a willingness to tolerate more mediocrity in some races than in others. Thus the engineering method can relegate many minority students to an academic limbo in which there are neither serious expectations nor serious consequences. And in this limbo there is no clear link between one's skill development and one's advancement. One's presence on campus is tied at least as much to a racial politics as to one's own efforts. Which does one do: develop skills or hone a politicized racial identity?

Conversely, a developmental model—in which minorities are asked to become competitive with others—restores the natural incentives of life. Excellence becomes the mechanism of inclusion and academic weakness the reason for exclusion. In this model, disadvantage is not exculpatory; it is a prod to excellence. Where this model prevails—sports, music, entertainment—blacks thrive.

So why do we keep trying to engineer rather than asking for development? Because American institutions and their largely white leaders lack the moral authority to insist on true excellence from blacks in the way that they insist on it from whites and Asian-Americans. These institutions and leaders must seek racial moral authority—must prove the negative, that they are not racist—simply to function in a society greatly shamed by its racist history.

The problem is that this moral authority invariably comes at the expense of minority development. And

this, I believe, is the single greatest problem in American racial reform.

This profound neediness determines all, and it drives the society over and over again into engineering and away from the slower but effective struggle of development. Affirmative action and X-percent plans may not close skills gaps between the races and may injure our best institutions, but they display that posture of repentance that moral authority requires. Because this problem of moral authority affects all whites, it is distinctly nonpartisan. If Democrats engineer with affirmative action, many Republicans now want to engineer with X-percent plans. The need for racial moral authority is so absolute and urgent for white men on both sides of the political divide that they simply cannot risk a developmental approach to equality. Out of the white mouth, development—with all its disproportionate yet necessary demands on former victims—plays as mean and victim-blaming. Neither Gore, Bradley, Bush, nor McCain can ask minorities for the sacrifices that parity with other groups demands. All four are engineers. Even when they support development in earlier grades—as G. W. Bush does—they favor college admissions programs that tolerate the very mediocrity that keeps minorities from becoming truly equal.

They will likely justify this by saying that minority disadvantages are exculpatory. The disadvantage explains the weakness and therefore the weakness should be tolerated. But of course, in the long run, reality does not tolerate weakness even when it is caused by a legacy of slavery and segregation. And here is the nub of the problem. Just at the moment when this truth—made clear by centuries of black suffering—might be allowed to become a powerful motivation to excellence in black life, it is muted by white institutions and leaders who protect blacks from it as a way of asserting their own moral authority.

In a free society, inequalities will be overcome primarily by the will of those who suffer them. This truism does not "let society off the hook" so much as point toward reform that asks a lot of the people it tries to help. It is only the obsession with moral authority in those who never suffered inequality that makes this seem harsh.

NR

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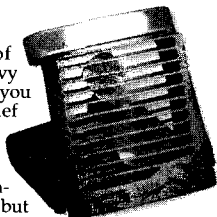


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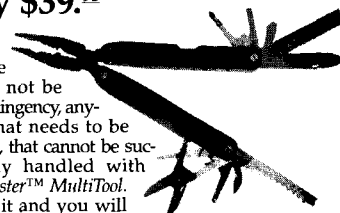
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A Vet They Can Love

Why McCain, and not Bob Dole

MARK STEYN

ALAN KEYES has forced John McCain to withdraw his claim, advanced at the MTV Awards, that his favorite band is Nine Inch Nails, the popular techno-industrial-satanic-goth combo. After Keyes drew attention to some of their more, um, robust lyrics, McCain conceded that "it was a poor choice." Instead of whacking McCain for being a Tippered wimp not man enough to stand up for his favorite pop group, media boomers jeered at Keyes for failing to spot that the famously laugh-a-minute senator had been making a "joke."

Well, I dunno. He looks like a Nine Inch Nails fan to me—twitchy, nervy, the same alarmingly random smile as the guy on the overnight Greyhound out of Buffalo who gets on at the last minute and comes and sits next to you. When a U.S. senator claims to have the same musical tastes as fellow "maverick" Kip Kinkel, who wore a Nine Inch Nails cap to gun down his high-school cafeteria, who are we to assume it's a joke?

But perhaps my perception of the senator is tainted by the fact that I've met him only in my capacity as a member of the public. Perhaps he's twitchy, nervy, and randomly smiling when he's with me and my Granite State neighbors because he's itching to ditch us North Country hicks and get back to shooting the breeze with the Boys on the Bus. John McCain, raves Albert R. Hunt in the *Wall Street Journal*, is "running the most open, candid and accessible campaign." That's true. If you're a *Wall Street Journal* man, Sen. McCain is open, candid, and accessible. As it happens, I too contribute to the *Journal's* pages. I'm also a senior columnist with one of the world's largest newspaper groups. If I were introduced to McCain as "Mark Steyn, colossus of the global media," I'm sure he'd have me in the back of the

bus, swapping side-splitting gags about Alzheimer's patients, Chelsea Clinton, etc. After all, even the Norwegian correspondents get face time with the senator. But, as it is, I get introduced to McCain only as an inmate of the first-in-the-nation primary state—"This is Mark, who lives in . . ."—and, as he is with pretty much all my fellow Granite Staters, he's perfunctory, a little distracted, as phony as everyone else.

Phonier, in fact. Dubya, for example, though he's supposedly the "insulated," "manufactured" candidate, has time for everyone in the room—kisses and backrubs for the gals, some relaxed ribbing for the guys.

The bizarre love affair between McCain and the media is, to put it in terms an MTV Awards attendee would appreciate, a bit like the relationship between silicone pinup Pamela Anderson and bad-boy rocker Tommy Lee. We in the media are bland, plastic, airbrushed, and cosmetically enhanced, and John's our bit of rough. The only difference is that you don't need to download the video of us pleasuring him from the Internet because it's all over the front pages and network-news shows anyway. At the core of his appeal is that he's a veteran. Bob Dole was too, of course, but a fat lot we cared. A poll conducted a couple of months before the '96 election showed that a majority of Americans were unaware of Dole's military service. Over the years, they must have seen, even while surfing past



Dan Rather en route from Jerry Springer to the lesbian wrestling channel, thousands of shots of Dole's withered arm clutching that pen. But it never became iconic, inspirational, transformational—not like McCain's sacrifice.

For the gulf between Dole's past and the culture in which he was running for president, look no further than one testy exchange: Apropos Pat Buchanan's experience, Dole muttered, "I was in the *real* crossfire. It wasn't on television. It was over in Italy somewhere, a long time ago." But, in our present pampered condition, as the memory of real war recedes, the

Mr. Steyn is a widely published journalist whose current book is *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight*.

most potent martial imagery is strictly metaphoric. Last time around, wherever the president went, the local Democratic warm-up act introduced Bill Clinton by hailing his “undaunted courage” and “bravery.” A politician in Battle Creek was even able to say with a straight face: “This president is tough. Battle-tested.” In fact, this president is famously un-battle-tested. But, on that day in Michigan, it was the very notion of “battle” that sounded creaky—the notion of men—all kinds of ’em: butchers, bakers, specialty mail-order Vermont hand-dipped-candle artisans—putting it all on hold to slog it out in some patch of mud five thousand miles away. That’s now so remote from the general experience that it’s no wonder the only “traction” Bob Dole got from it was down at the physiotherapy clinic.

Veterans are a dying breed, though not for the reason people normally think so much as the nature of contemporary warfare. A “Kosovo veteran” is an oxymoron: Dropping bombs from 15,000 feet on uncloudy nights would not have been Bob Dole’s idea of service. My fellow New Hampshireite, W. D. Wetherell, in his novel about the primary, *The Wisest Man In America*, has his crusty old Yankee protagonist predict Eisenhower early on in ’52 because people feel good about the war, and supporting Ike is a way of hanging on to that feeling. There’s something enviably uncomplicated about voting for Eisenhower. McCain, by contrast, is a more complicated man for a more complicated war and a more complicated range of feelings. In urging a McCain presidency on the nation, the media are in tune with the narcissistic therapy culture of the day: McCain makes you feel good about feeling bad.

That’s why, on the whole, during the pre-Christmas is-he-or-isn’t-he-nuts? frenzy, McCain’s press buddies were unperturbed. Baby boomers—not least the middle-class media boys who mostly figured out ways to steer clear of the war—have a weird collective guilt complex about Vietnam. They still think it was a dumb, pointless conflict not worth getting killed for, but, precisely because of that, they have an exaggerated respect for military service. Electing a POW from a war America lost would validate both his sacrifice and their lack of it in a way that electing Ike or Dole wouldn’t. That’s why John McCain’s military record is working for him, whereas Bob Dole’s never did. Dole suffered physical injury in a good cause—big deal. The suggestion that McCain might have suffered mental injury in a stupid cause accords far more closely with media boomers’ view of warfare. He’s a military man for a demilitarized culture, which is why, as the *Times* of London hailed him the other day, he’s now “America’s most celebrated soldier.”

Huh? There are many reasons for “celebrating” John McCain, but his soldiering isn’t really one of them. “It doesn’t take a lot of talent to get shot down,” as he himself concedes, in a textbook example of the school of self-promoting self-deprecation. He’s right, though. It does take a modicum of talent, however, to finish above the bottom five in your graduating class. It takes a small degree of competence to avoid having to ditch one plane, fly a second into a power cable in Spain and plunge half the country into darkness, and plough a third into a wood, before bailing out of a fourth over Hanoi. John McCain is the Apache helicopter of American flyboys.

Even so, his military record wouldn’t really be relevant to his

presidential qualifications if it weren’t such an exquisite rehearsal for his political style: Having passed the first half of his career literally flying by the seat of his pants, Sen. McCain is spending the second metaphorically doing so. He’s asked his opinion on health care, taxes for single women, whatever, but he’s winging it, and he nosedives into the inky blackness. But the press fish him out, dry him off, and send him out good as new. He launches a campaign against “soft money” that slices through the political telegraph lines and leaves every core GOP support group in darkness, with no means of communication and miles from any power. He’s a kamikaze pilot who spends most of his time firing on his own troops. But he does so with dash and style and flamboyance, and so the media love him.

You can see what McCain gets out of the relationship from a glance at the papers. But what do his buddies get in return? Well, they get all that platoon camaraderie, but without having to be in an actual platoon! They get profanity, misogynist cracks, dirty jokes, crude racial stereotyping, the kind of man-to-man banter your average American journalist, in his anti-septic, sensitivity-trained, diversity-friendly, woman-friendly, minority-friendly, gay-friendly newsroom, hasn’t seen in two decades, poor thing. I hasten to add that McCain’s racism is strictly confined to his incessant digs at the French. Given that 40 percent of the population of northern New England is of French-Canadian descent, McCain’s francophobia might



In urging a McCain presidency on the nation, the media are in tune with the narcissistic therapy culture of the day.

seem a mite insensitive in New Hampshire, but accompanying reporters seem to have collectively decided it’s all part of his “authenticity”: No doubt they’ll be equally enthusiastic about African gags in Mississippi. Incidentally, on the record, evidence for the famous McCain sense of humor remains somewhat thin: Journalists always quote the way he introduces his staff and sometimes the press as being members of a “prison-release program”; he announces that he’s not here to plug his book but says it’s \$25 and available from Amazon.com; and he insults the French. As with most aspects of the campaign, the good stuff’s reserved for the press. Bouncing through the dark on the campaign bus, thrilling to McCain’s latest zinger about the ugly lesbian or whatever, the press corps feels the same frisson his comrades must have known three decades earlier. Admittedly, the White Mountains of New Hampshire aren’t quite as bad as the jungles of Vietnam, but it is hard to find a diner open after 7 P.M.

All Republican politicians fantasize about being loved by the national media. Most think the way to earn it is the Dubya route: Be compassionate, moderate, non-mean-spirited. McCain, by contrast, has been more or less consistently pro-life, pro-gun, anti-gay, but the media love him anyway because he’s a hot-tempered “maverick” who was tortured in the Hanoi Hilton. In the neatest way, he confirms what most liberal journalists feel about conservatives: You’ve

gotta be nuts to believe this stuff. If his candidacy goes kaboom, they can still congratulate themselves on having been sympathetic to a prominent "victim" of America's long national nightmare. And, ever after, they'll have a new syllogism: You're pro-life, pro-gun, and anti-gay? You must be a psychologically damaged fruitcake. The last one was.

Alan Keyes is wrong. The least insane thing about John McCain is his fondness for Nine Inch Nails. Whatever the real music playing in the senator's head, he has coolly parlayed America's fondness for victimhood, therapy, and psychobabble into the first intentionally dysfunctional candidacy. Whether the McCain-media love affair will outlast primary season remains to be seen. But, as Trent Reznor sings in the recent Nails song "Starf**kers, Inc.," "I'll be there for you/As long as it works for me." **NR**

The Special-Interest State . . .

. . . and how not to change it

JOHN O. MCGINNIS

JOHN MCCAIN is, we all agree, a hero. But does that mean he is also a great leader—the kind who should be president?

A great political leader performs three functions: He identifies a very important danger; he outlines a plan to defeat it; and he ends by embodying the solution, in such a way that his people simultaneously embrace both the person and his plan. Winston Churchill is a paradigmatic example. He identified Hitler early on as a mortal threat to the Free World, proposed war to victory as the only solution, and projected the defiance that symbolized that strategy.

Unfortunately, a virtuous man who identifies a serious danger, but proposes a drastically flawed solution to it, can do much more harm to his country than could a politician lacking in ideas or personal excellence. Herein lies the danger of a McCain presidency.

McCain has seized on a real political problem as the theme of his campaign: The government serves special interests instead of the public good. Over the last hundred years, the federal government has spent less and less on public goods—like defense and infrastructure—that benefit all Americans, while spending more and more on programs that benefit some Americans at the expense of others. McCain is right to insist that the special-interest state threatens our capacity for self-government. With special interests claiming so much of the budget—and distorting the regulatory process as well—the government can no longer energetically pursue the true national interest. Largely because the government has become

an engine of redistribution, we have a divisive political culture in which citizens distrust government and one another.

John McCain clearly makes a superb advocate for returning government to the pursuit of the common good. He gave 22 years of his life (including five and a half as a POW) to the greatest public good the government provided in the latter half of the century—the defense of the West against Communist totalitarianism. He emerged from that ordeal ennobled, as a symbol of true public service.

Unhappily, both on the campaign trail and in the Senate McCain consistently takes stands that would strengthen rather than dissolve the special-interest state. For example, he opposes large tax cuts—criticizing George W. Bush's plan as too ambitious because it will eat into the government surplus. But money in the hands of the government is catnip to special interests. It mobilizes them to seek benefits from the state. In contrast, tax cuts dampen the energy of the special interests by forcing them to persuade the legislature to raise taxes so they can get their subsidies.

McCain is no doubt sincere in saying that he would resist the fiscal demands of special interests, but the raw energy of one man is simply not equal to the task. Even his own proposals for cutting pork in other senators' states demonstrate this: They would trim our bloated budget by only a trivial amount. And even if he were to succeed in preserving the surplus, what would America gain in the long run? Any Democratic successor would spend it, just as surely as Bradley and Gore would dissipate today's surplus with excessive social spending. The special-interest state cannot be curbed through sheer force of will, but only through government policies that systematically limit government and refocus it on the public good.

One such policy is the flat tax. Under today's complicated code, special interests use their privileged position to gain tax breaks. While McCain has said that he has no problems with a flat tax, he has not offered any serious proposals to implement one. Moreover, his opposition to substantial tax cuts would make enactment of a flat tax infeasible. A flat tax would face howls of opposition from the special interests that would lose their preferences; their opposition can be overcome only by tax-rate cuts deep enough to energize the support of the broader population.

Even more troubling than McCain's position on taxes was his decision to sponsor a bill raising cigarette taxes as part of the proposed tobacco settlement. His legislation would have been a disaster, funding a whole Christmas tree of special-interest projects and leaving only a relatively small part of the proceeds to improve the health of smokers. The predominantly low-income smokers are the ones who would pay the most, in higher taxes. The bill was, therefore, a classic example of special-interest legislation, aiding groups with political leverage at the expense of the proclaimed beneficiaries.

But even worse, the bill would have rewarded the trial lawyers—perhaps the most dangerous and powerful special interest in America today. Its original version would have assured the trial attorneys billions of dollars in fees, which they then could have used to finance attacks on other industries. (McCain voted for an amendment to limit trial-lawyers' fees to \$4,000 an hour, but he appeared to be determined to proceed with his bill, regardless of the amendment's

Mr. McGinnis is a professor at Cardozo Law School, Yeshiva University.

success.) In any event, legislative ratification of such a huge tort settlement would have encouraged trial lawyers to use the tort system as a battering ram for further raids on enterprises that the Left dislikes. The gun industry and HMOs have already been subsequent targets.

The governmental structure that best serves the common good—by securing our liberty and property from depredation—is the rule of law. It is a mark of how far one special interest—lawyers—has degraded our institutions that tort law now maintains a class of modern Visigoths with license to plunder. A candidate dedicated to making the government once again an instrument for the public interest should not be endorsing these assaults, but proposing wholesale reform to restore law to its proper role.

McCain has also recommended expanding federal power in other ways that would ultimately help special interests. He has sponsored a “passenger bill of rights” that would impose a variety of new regulations on airline service. Anyone who has endured poor treatment on airplanes sympathizes with McCain’s objective, but his solution, once again, is fundamentally mistaken. However reasonable his particular requirements, the principle of federal management of passenger comfort would lead to regulation in the interest of the airlines and their employees, rather than that of the public. Airlines and their unions simply have greater incentives than the public to monitor the creation of such regulations. The better way to improve service is to increase competition, by eliminating the regulations that have made it harder to create new airlines and airports. Deregulation rather than reregulation must be the first impulse of a candidate who would restrain special interests.

Of course, at the center of McCain’s crusade against special interests have been his famous proposals for increased government regulation of campaign finance. His bills would restrict contributions to political parties and limit issue advertising before elections. The First Amendment defects of these regulations are well known; but they would also increase the power of special interests. First, they would restrain ordinary citizens from contributing their money to causes and candidates they support—but they would not limit academics, journalists, and pundits of all kinds from disseminating their political views in the course of their work. Perversely, McCain’s proposals would further empower the left-leaning groups who already enjoy disproportionate influence on the political process. Moreover, his proposals would still allow unions to conduct expensive campaigns to publicize such liberal ideas, thereby maintaining a lasting barrier to a successful conservative agenda.

Second, campaign-finance reform would permit legislators to write the rules that directly affect their chances for reelection. Thus, the principle of pervasive campaign regulation ultimately would help the special interest our Founders feared most—the rulers themselves—to insulate themselves from popular judgment.

Taken together, McCain’s ideas demonstrate a systematic flaw in the politics of personal heroism. It is not surprising that a man of action believes that he can, by his own edicts and determination, harness government for the common good. But—without wartime’s heightened sense of shared

purpose—his efforts will be subverted by the huge variety of special interests that will use their greater influence to turn these edicts to their own advantage. In a time of peace and prosperity, the solution to special interests is more subtle: a smaller government, to reduce the incentive of special interests to exercise influence; and a reinvigoration of structural restraints, like federalism, to recreate a market for governance and thus reorient public policy toward the common interest.

This is not the first time that a Republican of valor has mistakenly embraced muscular federal governance as a solution to the problem of special interests. At the beginning of the last century, Teddy Roosevelt decided to invigorate government, to try to constrain the power of the moneyed trusts that he believed were fostering monopolies in business and corruption in government. Instead of curbing monopolies and other special interests by lowering tariffs and reinvigorating competitive federalism, Roosevelt and his fellow progressive Republicans introduced the federal income tax and began the construction of a huge federal bureaucracy. The long-term result has been the huge growth of the special-interest state of which McCain complains today. Sadly, McCain’s ideas—like those of his personal hero—would exacerbate the very evils that he would like to vanquish. They would lead us to another century of excessive government, ruled by special interests. **NR**

Debtors’ Prison

McCain leads the GOP the wrong way

RAMESH PONNURU

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN is viewed as a maverick. Most of his colleagues in Congress have lined up behind George W. Bush, the establishment’s man. So why is it that on the biggest domestic-policy question of the day—what to do with the budget surplus—congressional Republicans are siding with McCain? Maybe it’s because on this issue, the bold challenge to the Washington consensus is coming from Bush.

The surplus has two parts: the payroll-tax revenues that are left after Social Security checks have been sent out, and the surplus from all the other operations of the government. (It’s slightly more complicated than that, but trust me, you don’t want to hear about it.) About the Social Security portion of the surplus—projected to be \$147 billion next year, and \$2 trillion over the next ten years—there is little political disagreement: That money is going to be “saved” in the Social Security trust fund.

The trust fund is a fiction of accounting; since the federal government is a debtor, it can’t actually save money for the future. What will really happen is that the feds will use the Social Security surplus to pay off some debt. Social Security will get some IOUs, owed by the government to the government. Whether this maneuver actually does anything for Social Security is questionable, but nobody in Washington is questioning it.

The Bush-McCain dispute concerns the non-Social Security surplus, projected (like the Social Security surplus) to be \$2 trillion over the next decade. Bush wants to return much of this surplus to taxpayers. His campaign estimates that his tax-cut plan would reduce federal revenues by \$483 billion over five years (assuming it doesn't increase economic growth, which would add back some revenue). McCain describes this as "fiscally irresponsible." He wants a smaller, \$237 billion tax cut, partially offset by tax increases on corporations. But he wants to spend 5 percent of the non-Social Security surplus to reduce the national debt, and to save 62 percent of it for Social Security. Since the saving has to be done through debt reduction, McCain's policy amounts to using two-thirds of the non-Social Security surplus to reduce the debt.

Why 62 percent? McCain says he's making good on President Clinton's 1999 promise to devote 62 percent of the surplus to Social Security. Actually, McCain's going much further than Clinton: The president was referring to 62 percent of the total surplus of \$4 trillion. McCain's talking about using the entire \$2 trillion Social Security surplus, plus 62 percent of the \$2 trillion non-Social Security surplus: a whopping \$760 billion difference.

Clinton's promise was widely seen as a ploy to block tax cuts, and House Republicans might be expected to side with Bush rather than Clinton or McCain—with tax cuts rather than debt reduction. Yet in early January, House Speaker Dennis Hastert announced that paying down the debt would be a priority for Republicans this year. He also made a long-term commitment: "We are putting together a plan to pay off all of our nation's debt so that our children will inherit a debt-free country." Only small tax cuts—relief from the marriage penalty and expanded educational savings accounts—are on the agenda.

Totally eliminating the national debt would be fraught with danger. It would make it harder for the Federal Reserve to make monetary policy. The Fed manages the money supply by buying and selling Treasury securities. But what if the government stopped offering securities? The Fed could buy corporate bonds instead—but which ones, and with what adjustments for risk? The potential for politicization is obvious.

Though reducing the national debt is widely supposed to bring down interest rates, that is unlikely. Economist Stephen Entin points out that with \$100 trillion in financial instruments around the world, even a major change in the national debt "isn't going to do anything substantial." But eliminating the debt, or coming close, could raise interest rates. That's because the dollar is a "reserve currency." Foreign governments use Treasury securities to back their own currencies. If they had to switch to something else—the euro, gold, whatever—the demand for the dollar would fall. Either the value of the dollar would decline, or the Fed would have to raise interest rates.

Merely reducing the debt, as opposed to eliminating it, wouldn't have disastrous effects. But it wouldn't do much good either. It wouldn't save Social Security, whose unfunded liabilities are in the tens of trillions thanks to rising life expectancies. Pretending otherwise would, if anything, make it harder to enact the free-market reforms to the program that McCain also advocates. On the campaign trail, Gary Bauer has been arguing against privatization of the program on the utterly specious grounds that there wouldn't be a problem if "the politicians" hadn't stolen money from the trust fund.

Republicans on the Hill think that using money to pay down the debt will keep surpluses from being spent on government programs. They're right that paying down debt is a better use of the money than most new spending. (On the other hand, a stronger defense would be worth a little debt.) But debt reduction would reduce the government's interest payments, too, and that would free up money to be spent. The extra money, of course, could be used to finance new tax cuts—but spending would be more likely. Besides, why not cut taxes today instead of tomorrow?

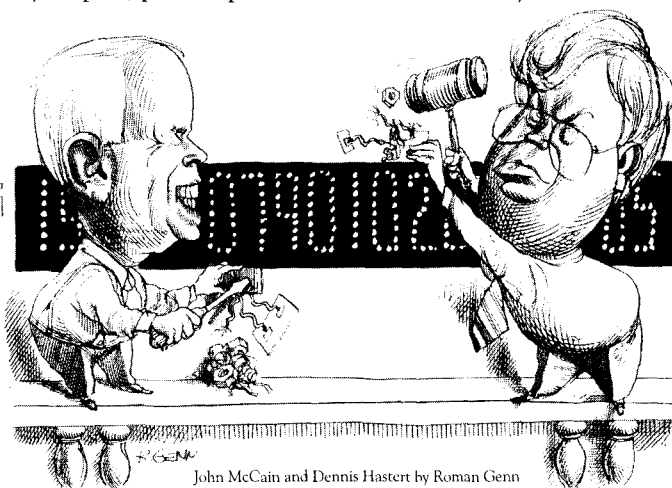
The supply-side case for cutting tax rates, after all, is that it improves incentives to work, save, and invest, and thereby makes more wealth available tomorrow. McCain doesn't appear to understand this point. He has been arguing that if Bush's tax cut is adopted, the government won't be able to finance Social Security and will therefore raise payroll taxes. But if the tax cut stimulates growth, financing the program will be a little easier.

Clinton, McCain, and Congress are taking a government-centered approach to savings.

Whatever the policy merits of debt repayment, it's reasonable to ask whether it's a realistic political option in the first place. Republicans have been able to block some spending by saying it would dip into the (again, mythical) Social Security trust fund. Paying down debt for its own sake, rather than to protect the trust fund, will be a much more abstract proposition for voters. Debt repayment polls well, but will it be more compelling than liberal proposals to subsidize prescription drugs for the elderly, or to bail out farmers, or to spend money for some other popular cause? Says Republican strategist Ed Gillespie, "I just don't believe that reducing the debt is a man-the-ramparts rallying cry for the party."

That's why Gov. Bush argues that the money has to be kept out of Washington in the first place: If it's there, it will be spent. It's a serious argument—far more so than the argument of McCain spokesmen that Bush is cutting taxes to curry favor with his rich campaign contributors.

In his fear of cutting taxes for the rich, though, McCain is in the mainstream of congressional Republicans. Like him, they have not challenged Clinton's 1993 tax hike. Like him, they have acquiesced in Clinton's use of debt reduction to



John McCain and Dennis Hastert by Roman Genn

block sweeping tax cuts. Like him, they have essentially taken the Clinton line on what to do next about Social Security. McCain and the congressional GOP are in a defensive crouch.

Debt reduction also fits with a McCain pattern of obsessing over problems that aren't particularly important. He inveighs against pork-barrel spending (a minuscule portion of the federal budget) and soft money. If McCain ultimately loses to Bush, one reason will be that Republican voters decided that they're still more concerned about high taxes—as well they should be. **NR**

TR and His Fan

Roosevelt and McCain, for good and ill

RICHARD LOWRY

JOHN MCCAIN mentions Teddy Roosevelt almost as often as Gary Bauer invokes Reagan's "shining city on a hill." TR makes obvious sense as a model for McCain: Roosevelt was also a war hero, who exuded a manly vigor and relentlessly trumpeted a rhetoric of reform. And TR is in the air. The office of George W. Bush's strategist Karl Rove is full of Roosevelt memorabilia. Rove himself has been compared to another figure of that era, Mark Hanna, the Republican operator who got McKinley elected from his front porch in 1896. Four years later, Hanna the insider had to accede to placing TR the insurgent on the ticket with McKinley. If W. wins the nomination, Rove and McCain may well reprise their respective roles later this year.

These are just the first of the parallels between our own America and the "Gilded Age," the period roughly from 1870 to 1912, when runaway economic growth overshadowed politics. After the U.S. Steel deal in 1901, one journalist wrote that "the world [has] ceased to be ruled by . . . so-called statesmen, [who are] in place simply to carry out the orders of the world's real rulers—those who control the concentrated portion of the money supply." After the AOL-Time Warner merger in mid January, Frank Rich of the *New York Times* wrote that the deal "reduced the imminent presidential primaries to quaint sideshows" and would "shape our lives long after we've forgotten which politician had which health or tax cut plan." So, if we are in a new Gilded Age, do we need a new TR?

In American history, new technologies have often led to declining prices and productivity-driven growth. The Gilded Age, thanks to the "robber barons," is a prime example. Average railroad freight rates dove from 20 cents a ton mile in 1865 to as low as 1.75 cents in 1900. By the time Rockefeller's Standard Oil had captured 90 percent of the oil market, it had, through efficiencies, pushed down the price per barrel from 58 cents to 8 cents. Andrew Carnegie drove the price of steel rails from \$160 a ton in 1875 to \$17 a ton in 1898. The railroads, oil, steel—all were the fiber of America's industrialization, and the effect of the low prices energized the entire economy.

Something similar is going on today, as new technologies loosen the constraints of time and space, and the global marketplace puts downward pressure on prices, making for a blessed dynamic: economic growth *lowering* inflation. Like their "robber baron" forbears, the agents of the digital revolution—Bill Gates, Steve Case & Co.—aren't themselves the technological innovators, but instead marketers of what others have wrought ("Pioneering don't pay," Andrew Carnegie liked to say). Amazon.com's Jeff Bezos, who by creating a larger, better-informed Internet marketplace is cutting retail prices, had a Gilded Age analogue in Richard Warren Sears, who created a mail-order mass market and essentially invented the affordable sewing machine and refrigerator.

During the spurt of economic change 100 years ago, men such as Carnegie and Rockefeller eclipsed the politicians, who were characterized by their mediocrity and petty corruption. Sound familiar? Take your pick. Is President Clinton most similar to Chester A. Arthur, the accidental president who always had a stink about him, owing to his roots in the New York Customs House (the 19th century's answer to Little Rock, Arkansas)? Or is a better model Grover Cleveland, the hard-money, anti-labor Democrat who scrambled the differences between the parties?

Pick whichever Gilded Age president you like, and Clinton will have in common running down of the stature of the office, while boasting one major, negative accomplishment: managing not to interfere with the good times. "The function of the political system was not so much to promote this process of market democracy," Paul Johnson writes in *A History of the American People*, "as to enable it to take place, and accelerate, by removing obstacles, natural or man-made. It was a case of allowing the ship of state to float downstream under the impulse of a mighty current of innovation and improvement."

The exception was TR, an intellectual and outdoorsman, who believed in "energy in the executive." He bashed the trusts, regulated the railroads, and established the Departments of Commerce and Labor. Most appealing to contemporary conservatives is Roosevelt's robust interventionism and unstinting defense of American patriotism and self-government. TR booster David Brooks of *The Weekly Standard* has argued that today's Right desperately lacks a Rooseveltian sense of national mission. He approvingly quotes Roosevelt's warning that Americans risk becoming "sunk in a scrambling commercialism, heedless of the higher life, the life of aspiration, of toil and risk." TR's "muscular progressivism," according to Brooks, was the antidote.

"It seemed to work," Brooks writes. "At the beginning of the century, America practically burst with energy and nearly exploded with self-confidence. Corporate empires were built, industries established. Cities leapt skyward. The public buildings completed during that era bowl you over with their striving exuberance." But this has it backward, attributing the period's glorious accomplishments to national politics instead of to the daring and work of bold entrepreneurs. All of this bursting energy had a running start decades before Roosevelt took office in 1901. The genius architect Louis Sullivan, to cite one example, had 90 major commissions in Chicago between 1887 and 1895. And it kept right on going after TR left, a product of the work of Whitney and Edison and Ford

and all those men Roosevelt excoriated: the Morgans, and the Rockefellers, and the Carnegies.

Today McCain self-consciously speaks in Rooseveltian terms. In a January 5 speech, he made an eloquent plea for renewal of American citizenship. He warned that “cynicism threatens to become a ceiling on our greatness. Too many Americans no longer see themselves as part of a cause greater than themselves. We are fast becoming a nation of alienated individualists.” McCain therefore suggests a national cause that “brings us closer to others, to our families, to our communities, and ultimately brings us together in the uniquely American project of self-government.” And what might that great cause be? New campaign-finance rules! (These would bring us closer to our *families*?)

Banning soft money is not exactly building the Panama Canal, and as a national cause it is characterized less by exuberance than by preening earnestness (Jedediah Purdy for reform czar!). But it does fit with TR’s progressivism—because progressivism wasn’t just about energy, but also about fear and control, and grabbing power back from grubby businessmen and putting it in the hands of middle-class, college-educated experts. There is a direct line from Roosevelt (especially the TR of 1912, who was impatient



Banning soft money is not exactly building the Panama Canal—but it does fit, in a way, with TR’s progressivism.

with constitutional restraints and advocated new regulations and New Deal-style safety-net programs) to Woodrow Wilson, who was the first modern liberal: a college professor who pioneered the idea of the “living Constitution” and gave us the first tendrils of big, intrusive government.

A century ago, there were three groups of professionals who strongly identified with progressivism: lawyers, doctors, and muckraking journalists. Today McCain has a set of regulations to appeal to each of them (his tobacco bill, the Patient’s Bill of Rights, and campaign-finance reform, respectively). He is still operating on the progressive model of protecting the public through regulation, when today it is businesses (and often the public) that need protection from the overweening administrative state built by progressives—hence the eagerness of businessmen to contribute to politicians. McCain’s own letters to the FCC in behalf of contributors stymied by the agency’s bureaucrats made for a neat demonstration of the point. In the 1900s, trusts attracted the interest of regulators partly because they played too brazenly in politics; in the premier antitrust case of our age, the target is a company, Microsoft, that foolishly paid too little attention to Washington.

This suggests that, if there is an agenda of renewed self-government waiting to be born, it is anti-progressive and anti-regulatory. It would remove as many obstacles as possible from the new economy; it would devolve power to states and localities; it would take on the judiciary; it would insist on a basic

national cohesion as against multiculturalism; and it would cut taxes. In its devolution and challenge to the courts, it would vindicate and foster political involvement, addressing the most worrisome trend on the right, which isn’t that conservatives are too anti-government, but that they are flat-out anti-political. Taken as a whole, the agenda could be a project of national renewal, but one that would still depend on a limited federal government.

But limited government doesn’t hold much interest for McCain. In his “no tax cuts for the rich” opposition to marginal tax-rate reduction—the tax-cutting measure least subject to political control—there is another echo of Roosevelt, who advocated a graduated income tax to close the gap between rich and poor. McCain’s position may be only a political calculation, but it may be something deeper as well. When the hurly-burly of commerce is identified with “selfishness,” as it is in the rhetoric of both TR and McCain, it seems natural to single out the richest as the most selfish. This is a perspective that neglects the well-springs of virtue underlying democratic capitalism: thrift, foresight, service to others (the consumer, one’s family), and, *pace* Roosevelt, “toil and risk.”

Most intellectuals share this blind spot, which is why they love presidents such as TR and Kennedy, who by inviting writers and artists to the White House supposedly save the nation from philistinism. Forgotten are the cultural contributions of people who aren’t politicians. J. P. Morgan’s library is one of the world’s finest collections of rare books. By 1919, the Carnegie Endowment had given away \$350 million and built 2,800 libraries and donated 7,600 church organs. Some of the nation’s best universities—the University of Chicago, Stanford, Duke, Carnegie-Mellon—were founded by these gauche titans of business.

Ultimately, what is so appealing about Roosevelt is not that he fought these men, but that he shared their brash, self-confident spirit. And McCain’s failing is that he represents the spirit of today’s precious and guilt-ridden political class rather than the fast-moving creators of the new economy. McCain is a genuine hero, but his trial did not come in a great American adventure like San Juan Hill; it came in a drawn-out debacle. There is something ineffably sad, not triumphant, about him. Indeed, his favorite posture is the *mea culpa*. And he is politically too timid to challenge the multicultural pieties of the age. Imagine a great American patriot who can’t muster a disapproving word about teaching American schoolchildren in Spanish.

But the good news is that America doesn’t necessarily need a new Roosevelt now, doesn’t need a vigorous executive or a national cause. Sometimes there are no great crises, no Cold War to win, no civil-rights revolution to effect. The genius of America is that, given freedom, these periods needn’t be characterized by drift, but instead can be opportunities for great, galloping, world-changing progress. So what the country needs now is perhaps not a Roosevelt, but a McKinley, someone with the sense to stand back—or even “pat,” as they said at the time—and let the creativity and imagination of Americans do its work. McCain often says he wants to give our country back to us. What he doesn’t understand is that it isn’t his to give.

NR

The Comeback Kid, Indeed

How Clinton is winning

JAY NORDLINGER

It has now been a year since President Clinton was acquitted by the Senate—only a year. Never has one year seemed more like ten, or twenty. The impeachment drama has acquired some of the antiqueness of, say, the *Mayaguez* incident. Rep. John Kasich said recently that he had never seen an issue once so important “that crosses our minds less.” Another Ohio congressman, Ted Strickland, said, “It almost seems unreal that it ever happened. It seems irrelevant at this point.”

Clinton has been a busy beaver since February 1999, when his party held strong for him in the Senate: He has fought in the Balkans, completed many successful photo-ops, and engaged in the vital business of legacy-shaping. Is he winning? That is, is he winning the battle (it is more like a war) to interpret the Year of Monica—sex with an intern, perjury, subornation of perjury, obstruction of justice, abuse of power, censure by a federal judge (accompanied by a \$90,000 fine), an \$850,000 payoff to a much-ridiculed sexual-harassment plaintiff, impeachment, and all that? There is evidence that he is, indeed, winning—which should surprise no one who is a true student of either this politician or the present age.

Throughout that wild year of 1998, many analysts said that, no matter what happened, Clinton would be besmirched—there would be no washing out the stains of his misdeeds. If no official action were taken, he would still be sullied. If he were censured by the House or Senate, that would be even worse. If he were impeached—impeached, of all things!—that would be catastrophic, regardless of what the Senate did later. The first line of his obituary or encyclopedia entry would relate that he was only the second president in history to be impeached. He would be consigned to the lowest of the low.

Others, however, more wary, warned that Clinton would have to be forced from office if the seriousness and magnitude of his misconduct were to be recognized. If he survived—even by the skin of his teeth—he would end up winning. Anything short of an abject helicopter liftoff from the South Lawn would mean victory for him. What with his remarkable skills, and the national temper, he would crawl back, then run, preen, and cavort.

Some conservatives have found comfort in a recent poll showing that the number of Americans supporting impeachment has risen from 35 percent (at the time of the act) to 50 percent. These same conservatives are likely to point out that George W. Bush is ahead of Vice President Gore in national

surveys, a fact that some attribute to lingering resentment of the president. Yet these bits provide only mild relief in the face of other indications that Clinton, who has patience, for one virtue, is gaining ground in the struggle for his reputation. These indications are political, cultural, and somewhat psychological. Taken together, they suggest that the old escape artist is set to slip the noose once again.

For starters, Clinton is back among the press. Granted, he speaks only to the friendly press (Larry King, Carole Simpson of ABC, Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*), but he is doing it, and doing it with—to use an oxymoron made for Clinton—brazen finesse. He is even giving proper press conferences, without foreign leaders at his side to serve as crutches. After the last such one, *Newsweek*, speaking for the rest of the major media, said that the session had shown “why, for all his sleaze, we’ll miss the big guy.”

Conservatives like to joke that Gore, on the stump, hardly ever mentions Clinton’s name—but neither do the Republican candidates, which is curious, given that they have an opportunity to run against an administration that is based to a large degree on lies. Only Orrin Hatch refers regularly, or with any heat, to the presidency that we have experienced for seven years.

Monica Lewinsky, far from disgrace, chats gaily with a gentle and avuncular Larry King. She is all slimmed down, and bringing in the money. She is invited by professors to address constitutional-law classes, where she discourses on privacy.

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Kenneth Starr and Linda Tripp, meanwhile, are possibly the most hated individuals in the country. Starr goes on his own round of interviews, pathetic. He now says that he should not have taken up the Lewinsky matter in the first place. He pleads with Clinton to “get right with the law.” He alludes to the events of 1998 as “the recent unpleasantness,” in the manner of other Americans, over a hundred years ago, who also had lost a war. As for poor Tripp, she has sought refuge in the plastic surgeon’s knife, and is one of the few players in this tragedy to continue to face real legal jeopardy. The contempt that is poured on her every day, particularly with regard to her looks, is breathtaking—in this supposedly feminist age.

And what of the president’s men? They are, for the most part, smelling like roses. Mike McCurry has been hired as a political analyst by CNN, his reward, evidently, for his role in thwarting the press and killing trust in government. He labored night and day to mislead, bully, and block the press; now he is welcomed into its very bosom. The Washington media’s soft spot for this shifty flack is a mystery. Lanny Davis, another of the type, is now a lobbyist about the capital. Paul Begala, too, is in clover, as a personality for MSNBC. James

Carville, as always, fairly rules the airwaves, treated as a colorful original instead of a poisonous snake. Ann Lewis will likely get nice media work when she leaves the White House, although her hypocrisy in the Anita Hill and Kathleen Willey cases—to take only one example of her jaw-dropping inconsistency—would drive any normal person to a distant cave, for reflection and atonement.

Think, too, of Kenneth Bacon, the Pentagon spokesman who handed classified information from Tripp's national-security file to a Clinton-friendly reporter, Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker*—a clear illegality of the sort that Charles Colson, in a different time and under a different president, went to jail for. Bacon is still at his podium, unchastened and, presumably, uninvestigated. The department's inspector general promised a report on the matter by—get this—July 9, 1998. Needless to say, there will never be any report. The Pentagon must know the simple truth that no one cares.

Finally, consider a recent, fawning, morally vacant profile of James Kennedy, appearing in the *New York Times*. Kennedy is another Clinton scandal spinner, and the *Times* allowed him to spin at length, unchecked. About the denouement of the Lewinsky affair, he said, "We were looking over the edge into some sort of abyss, and it caused the body politic to take a step back and catch our breath. It was ultimately a cathartic moment." The paper's reporter, John M. Broder, described this diligent stonewaller as "laconic" (a designation that Nixon's surviving men must envy). He was, according to Broder, merely "an accidental tourist in the realm of scandal spin," never dreaming that he would be "inundated with questions on his boss's truthfulness and sexual behavior." Sounding a common refrain, Kennedy said, "I don't think I was ever called upon to defend what happened. What we did was defend the presidency and the people's choice in the last election." Has he learned anything? Yes: that "no good comes of the politics of scandal and investigation."

CLINTON UNTOUCHED

Elsewhere, Clinton and his legions are pretty much left alone. Juanita Broadrick, the Arkansas woman who has alleged—with chilling credibility—that Clinton raped her in 1978, is a figure we all turn away from, shuddering. No journalist has ever asked Clinton to address the subject, except once, obliquely: The president declined to comment—even to deny the charge! Gore, campaigning in New Hampshire, was asked about Broadrick by an ordinary citizen, and he gave a rambling, tortured answer. Only one television network—the humble Fox—highlighted Gore's remarks. William J. Bennett, a major Republican figure—and, indeed, considering his book sales, American figure—is able to say publicly of Clinton, "I believe he's a rapist," and no one bats an eye. You might think that a furor would ensue; that one man or the other, Bennett or Clinton, would have to stand down; that

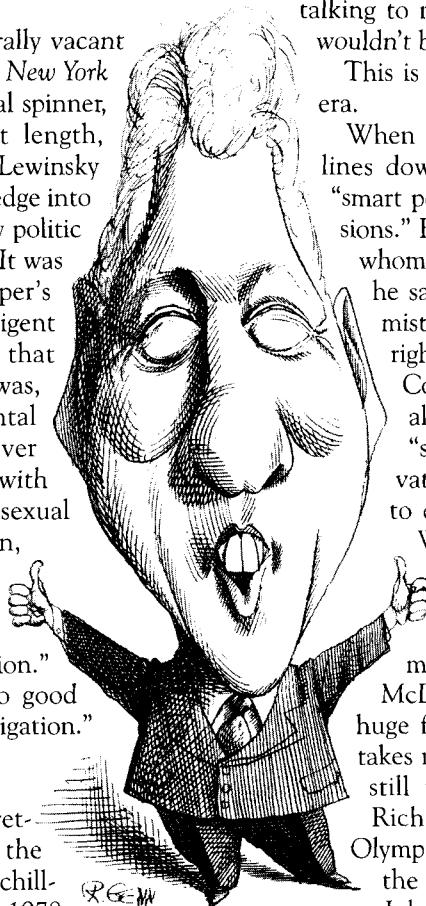
the two could not exist in the same environment. But—nothing.

The president is unlikely to get within a mile of a journalist who would challenge him on Broadrick. Instead, he sticks close to the likes of Bryant Gumbel, who, in an interview, invited him to play golf at his country club up in Westchester County. "I'd be happy to be your guest anytime," replied Clinton. Carole Simpson is even safer for the president than Gumbel: "You're the first black president," she said to Clinton. "How does that make you feel?" ("I think it's a compliment," was Clinton's response. What else?) Later, Simpson said, "I have to bask in this moment for a moment, because I am here talking to the most powerful man on the planet, who [grew up] a poor boy from Arkansas, [and] I am an African-American woman, [who] grew up working-class on the South Side of Chicago, and this is a pretty special moment for me, to be here talking to you. How does it feel talking to me, that I made it too, when people said I wouldn't be able to?" Clinton allowed that it felt okay.

This is the stuff of ABC News in the late-Clinton era.

When it comes to legacy-shaping, Clinton has his lines down pat. He praises the Founding Fathers, "smart people" who understood about "partisan passions." He unfailingly mentions Nelson Mandela, to whom he, by implication, equates himself. History, he says, will record that "I made a bad personal mistake, I paid a serious price for it, but that I was right to stand and fight for my country and my Constitution and its principles." Starr and his allies were nothing but a band of rogues who "spent \$50 million trying to ferret out" a private peccadillo because "they had nothing else to do," seeing that "all the other charges"—Whitewater, Travelgate, Filegate—were "totally false, bogus, made up." What's more, "people were persecuted because they wouldn't commit perjury against me"—an allusion to such innocents as Susan McDougal and Webb Hubbell. He laments the huge financial costs that his circle incurred, but takes no responsibility for them. In his mind, he is still the protagonist in *Darkness at Noon*, or Richard Jewell, falsely accused of the Atlanta Olympics bombing. He also draws reassurance from the example of his fellow impeachee, Andrew Johnson: "I think most people believe that he was unjustly impeached and that the fact that he stood up to it and refused to give in . . . reflects well on him in the history of the country."

What history says of Clinton, of course, will depend on who is writing it. Certainly we know what the 400 historians who signed an anti-impeachment, anti-Starr, anti-Republican petition will say. Typical of them is Princeton's Sean Wilentz, who, in snarling testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, told Republicans that they risked "going down in history with the zealots and the fanatics." On the anniversary of Impeachment Day, December 19, the *Boston Globe* expressed a model Clintonite judgment, edito-



Bill Clinton by Roman Genn

rializing that “long after impeachment passions have disappeared into the mists of history, Clinton will be remembered for prodigious gifts that were too often squandered but also for presiding over a golden age of peace and prosperity.” Jeffrey Toobin, of *The New Yorker* and ABC, has had his crack with the just-published *A Vast Conspiracy*. “Extremists of the political right,” he says, “tried to use the legal system to undo elections—in particular the two that put Bill Clinton in the White House.” Toobin is, in the parlance of the day, perfectly “on-message.”

About that all-important obituary or encyclopedia entry: Clinton, in a conversation with Dan Rather back in March, said that he was “not at all sure” that impeachment would figure “in the first paragraph.” Neither should anyone else be. In a conservative nightmare, there would be a line in the middle or toward the bottom of the entry about a “right-wing coup attempt” that Clinton and his party succeeded in repelling. If the broader culture war continues to go Clinton’s way, he may wind up regarded as, in David Frum’s striking phrase, “a martyr to the cause of sexual liberty.” In a September 1998 cabinet meeting—the one in which Clinton issued a semi-apology for allowing his ministers to lie in his behalf—the president reportedly scolded Donna Shalala for suggesting that leadership had a moral dimension. By that standard, sniffed Clinton, she should have preferred Nixon in 1960 to John F. Kennedy. Who, really, in a Clintonized world, can overcome that rejoinder?

TIME ON HIS SIDE

That Clinton has traveled so far from impeachment in so short a time is astonishing. Revisit, just for kicks, Judge Susan Webber Wright’s extraordinary rebuke of him: “The record demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the President responded to plaintiffs’ questions by giving false, misleading and evasive answers that were designed to obstruct the judicial process. . . . There is simply no escaping the fact that the President deliberately violated this court’s discovery orders and thereby undermined the integrity of the judicial system. Sanctions must be imposed, not only to address the President’s misconduct, but to deter others who might themselves consider emulating the President of the United States . . .” Eleven days after Judge Wright fined him, Clinton was invited by the American Bar Association to address its annual convention. (Hubbell, for good measure, was invited as well.) Will history—will anyone—remember such grossness against Clinton? Will anyone ask, to pick another bone, the *Wag the Dog* questions? These, too, have faded speedily from memory. As with Juanita Broaddrick, it is probably too horrible to contemplate that a president could employ military force—in Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iraq—merely for the sake of his own political and legal hide. Neither does anyone seem to want to think about Chinese generals stuffing the U.S. president’s hand full of cash.

On the electoral front, legacy-watchers will have their eye on three races this year: the presidential contest, of course; the New York Senate race; and the campaign to control the House of Representatives. If Clinton pulls off a trifecta—that is, if Gore wins, and Hillary Clinton wins, and the Democrats recapture control of “the people’s chamber”—he and his

claque will be able to claim, not at all implausibly, that Americans flat-out repudiated impeachment. Republicans will probably shrink from making Election 2000 a referendum on Clinton. Given the beating they suffered at the hands of the Democrats two years ago, as they were on the verge of impeaching Clinton, who can blame them?

Bill Clinton will have not only this final year of his presidency, but many years thereafter to shape his legacy, to condition the national memory of 1998. He has, after all, less to come back from than the acquitted double-murderer O. J. Simpson, to whom he has been famously and usefully compared. Clinton will talk and talk, and spin and spin, leading tours of his library, giving lectures, writing eloquent and artful books, advising heads of state, raising money at Jackson-Jefferson Day dinners, schmoozing with his friends and admirers in academia and the press. He may even serve in Congress—he has already stated that he admires John Quincy Adams and (how about this for aptness?) Andrew Johnson for doing so in their post-presidential years. He does not have to win the struggle for his name right now, or before the next election, or even in the following decade. This is a twilight struggle, a long-term project, whose objective Clinton will never lose sight of.

On the very night the Lewinsky storm broke, Clinton’s then-adviser Dick Morris warned that he would not survive a prompt and full confession. The president answered, “Well, we’ll just have to win, then.” He appears to be winning even now—just as, come to think of it, he always does. **NR**

Against Microsoft

A primer for conservatives

ROBERT H. BORK

OF the hundreds of thousands of words that have come tumbling out of word processors since the trial court’s decision in the Microsoft case, most are hostile, often bitterly so, and almost all of those are written by people who would generally be classified as conservatives. Since modern conservatism professes devotion to free markets and to the rule of law, this virulence suggests an inadequate understanding of the case. That, sad to say, seems to be true of NATIONAL REVIEW and the writers it chose to bolster the pro-Microsoft view.

The facts need to be restated. Microsoft’s monopoly is protected by the “applications barrier”: Consumers want an operating system that has the most applications (word processing, etc.), and applications writers go to the system with the most consumers. This is the “chicken-and-egg” problem

Mr. Bork, a contributing editor of NATIONAL REVIEW, is the author of, among other books, *The Tempting of America* and *Slouching towards Gomorrah*. He served as a consultant to Netscape in the above-discussed case.

that makes it impossible for competitive operating systems to thrive. But Netscape's browser, which first made access to the Internet easy, also has the capacity to receive applications, so that, if it were used widely enough, neither consumers nor applications writers would care what operating system underlay the browser, and Microsoft's monopoly would gradually erode. The core of the case was Microsoft's attack on Netscape's browser by, among other tactics, incorporating its own browser into its operating system, thus making it inconvenient and expensive to use Netscape's browser as well. Computer manufacturers had no choice but to take Microsoft's browser; Netscape, having no operating system, could not effectively respond.

Microsoft's internal communications made clear that the object of incorporating its own browser in the operating system was entirely predatory, to "cut off Netscape's air supply," and not, as claimed at trial, to increase efficiency or respond to consumer desires. Indeed, Microsoft executives were clear that on the merits, their browser was unlikely to win against Netscape's.

NR's editorial comment opens with the least promising line of attack—that Microsoft does not really have a monopoly of personal-computer operating systems. That will come

■

When competitors fix prices, consumer harm is conclusively presumed. There is no reason for the action other than to alter the competitive price. It is so here.

■

as news to computer manufacturers, who have repeatedly lamented, often in anger, that there is no viable substitute for Windows. Manufacturers must have it or shut down. No more realistic is the contention that because most consumers already own some version of Windows, Microsoft is its own competition, which accounts for prices "declining in every market in which Microsoft has a product." Judge Learned Hand rejected this argument in his 1945 Alcoa opinion, but it is irrelevant anyway, because consumers automatically get the latest version of Windows whenever they buy a computer. Microsoft does not lower its price for its operating system; any price decline is owing to machine and chip manufacturers.

That Netscape, as a company, survived Microsoft's assault is also irrelevant. The issue is the destruction of Netscape's threat to the applications barrier that protects Microsoft's monopoly. NR's prediction that America Online and Netscape, after the acquisition by AOL, would control 58 percent of the browser market has proved considerably wide of the mark. AOL has prudently decided not to challenge Microsoft's browser with Netscape's, with the result that Microsoft's current market share is about 70 percent and rising. The browser war is over.

The failure of the editorial's arguments means that NR's

position must be vindicated, if at all, by the two articles published in the same issue. That is unfortunate. One article, by Prof. Richard Epstein, addresses the merits of the controversy, and the other, by Holman W. Jenkins Jr., attributes discreditable motives to just about everyone who supports the court's decision. Neither is remotely adequate.

Mr. Epstein displays a thorough incomprehension of antitrust theory and hence of the case against Microsoft. He starts with the mistaken notion that "it is virtually impossible, historically, to identify *any* successful case of predation" because the predator must lower its prices below cost and suffer greater losses than the prey. As I explained over 20 years ago, that argument holds only when the predator must expand output and sell below marginal cost. There are numerous successful instances of predation when those constraints were not present. Microsoft, having a monopoly of operating systems, did not have to increase its rate of output, and its marginal costs were negligible.

Microsoft continued to make profits on the joint product of operating system and browser, while Netscape, lacking an operating system, had to offer its only product, the browser, free, which is certainly below any cost you care to name. It is nonsense to say that Netscape was not hurt because it was free to offer its browser for nothing. That is freedom to lose money forever. But Epstein loses all credibility with the following fantastic statement: "The blunt truth is that this tie-in is worthless." Then why did Microsoft insist upon it? If you want a blunt truth, it is that the tie-in drove Netscape's browser from the market, and to Microsoft that was worth a great deal.

The fact that Microsoft attacked Netscape by incorporating its own browser in its operating system leads Epstein to accuse me of invoking the "shopworn theory of tie-ins that [my] own earlier work . . . largely discredited." Wrong. What I and others discredited was the notion that a monopolist could gain a second monopoly profit by tying the sale of a complementary product to the sale of the monopoly product. When products are complements—razors and blades, for example—the entire monopoly profit can be extracted on the sale of the monopoly product. The razor purchaser will pay a monopoly price for a shave but cannot be made to pay two monopoly prices for razor and blade.

Epstein then gets the argument backwards by saying that I think the Microsoft tie-in is different because it was "used not to enhance the monopoly over operating systems, but to prevent Netscape from competing in the *browser* market." To the contrary, I have written repeatedly that the incorporation of the browser in the operating system was not designed to obtain a monopoly profit for the browser but to protect the Microsoft operating system by removing Netscape's browser as a receiver of applications, i.e., to enhance the operating-system monopoly by removing a potential substitute.

He also brings up the old complaint that there was no antitrust injury because consumers were not harmed. Clearly, they were. When competitors fix prices, consumer harm is conclusively presumed. There is no reason for the action other than to alter the competitive price. It is so here. Microsoft's use of predatory tactics to defend its monopoly

indicates that, absent such tactics, competition might more rapidly erode that monopoly. Consumers would have been offered lower prices and competitive innovation sooner.

Holman Jenkins attempts no analysis of the case's merits but contents himself with offering a false narrative of the industry and insulting those who think Microsoft might be guilty of anything. He describes Microsoft as primarily responsible for cheap, powerful desktop computers as well as the Internet's information cornucopia. Those are not the facts. The powerful and inexpensive desktops were created by computer and chip manufacturers. Microsoft did not lower the price of its operating system; and it had as much to do with the creation of the Internet as Al Gore. Microsoft bought rather than invented its most important technologies and deserves credit not as an innovator but as a marketer.

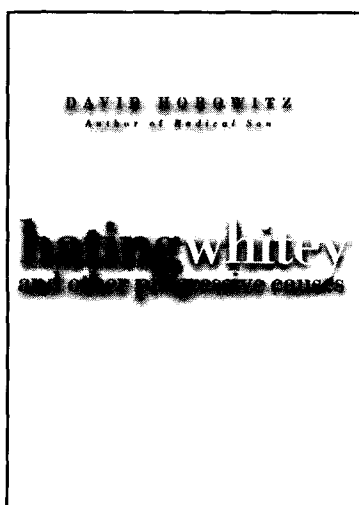
But the misinformation about Microsoft's achievements is as close as Jenkins comes to analysis. Instead, he reverts to the ad hominem abuse that has characterized his writings on this case from the beginning. In his latest version, he sees the case as the government "cutting an object of envy down to size," in which task it is supported by a "substantial part of the public" that wants Bill Gates punished for daring to "put himself forward." He supports this remarkable antitrust analysis with references to Sigmund Freud. Jenkins would do well to master the economics relevant to antitrust before turning to psychoanalytic explanations. The best that can be said for his fantasy is that it seems to accord with Bill Gates's view of the case. Jenkins would do well to leave persecution complexes to the executives of Microsoft, who are masters of the paranoid style. A journalism of personal destruction is no more attractive than a politics of personal destruction. Both are forms of McCarthyism, which is today almost exclusively the preserve of the liberal Left, and should be left to them.

The Microsoft case will soon move on to the remedy phase. That will present more complex problems than the conclusion that Microsoft violated the Sherman Act. The Department of Justice will have to decide whether to seek a remedy addressing only Microsoft's behavior, or urge structural relief. Either way, there are complicated issues to be addressed—but conservatives should not reflexively oppose consideration of the dissolution of Microsoft. There are advantages to a structural remedy that should not be overlooked by free-

market advocates. A structural remedy would avoid detailed regulation by court decree. Regulation of this industry is probably the worst of all possible courses; certainly no one should want to repeat the court supervision of the telephone industry following the AT&T breakup. Not only might the effects be deadening, but a detailed decree would be vulnerable to Microsoft's demonstrated capacity to maneuver around prohibitions. The AT&T experience does, however, provide one hopeful aspect of a dissolution of Microsoft: The parts of the company after dissolution might have far greater value to shareholders than the intact company does.

What we need now is less slogan-mongering and more thoughtful analysis of a complex topic. A position that boils down to "Private sector good, government bad" is less a philosophy than a tantrum. Aaron Director, the founder of the law-and-economics movement at the University of Chicago,

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"Horowitz is as much despised among [racial intellectuals] as Whittaker Chambers was at Georgetown dinner parties during the Alger Hiss case years ago. Among racial intellectuals, Horowitz is "Not Our Class, Dear." *Hating Whitey*—with its inflammatory title—deserves a reading. Horowitz is angry and polemical, but he is also a clear and ruthless thinker. What he says has an indignant sanity about it. For cautionary perspective in an argument like this, it pays to remember that Hiss was guilty and Chambers was right."

—*TIME* Magazine 9/22/99

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was fond of saying that *laissez faire* never meant more than that proposals for government intervention should be examined under a presumption of error. Indeed, that is all a sensible, rather than a knee-jerk, conservatism can mean. The facts of the Microsoft case are easily sufficient to overcome that presumption.

RICHARD A. EPSTEIN

JUDGE Bork's pointed defense of Netscape again confuses the welfare of Netscape with the welfare of consumers. His limp conclusion is that antitrust injury to consumers should be presumed from Microsoft's aggressive entry into the browser market, just as it is in horizontal price-fixing cases. But why? Rigged prices exclude some consumers altogether from the market, and raise the costs to others. Huff and puff as he will, Bork cannot deny that over the short run, Microsoft's entry lowered, not raised, consumer prices, and undercut the Netscape monopoly in the browser market.

So what long-term consequences should lead us to reject these gifts? Bork claims that the case involves a potent mix of predation and tie-ins that insidiously undercuts innovation by imposing barriers to applications. He writes as though giving away the browser for free condemns Netscape to perpetual losses. Wrong. As to predation, the entire prospect is far-fetched when the marginal cost of additional copies of Netscape or Explorer is virtually zero. How is it possible then to distribute additional copies at below cost? Indeed, Netscape now offers its browser for free—because, like Microsoft, it hopes to earn revenue from third-party advertisers and vendors. Bork never explains why the absence of an operating system prevents Netscape from carrying out the competitive counterstrategy it has in fact employed. Clearly, there's no predation here; if Bork were right, Netscape would have just abandoned the market entirely.

Nor is Bork right on the tie-in question, because there is an obvious alternative explanation. Breaking Explorer apart from Windows ignores the efficiency benefits that integrated programs give to those consumers who prefer Microsoft Explorer, while prolonging Netscape's monopoly in the browser market. It is wrong to look at only the undesirable consequences of a tie-in; its upside for consumers counts as well.

Anyone who finds Bork's consumer-injury claim convincing need only read the final pages of Judge Jackson's decision. Jackson starts with a huge concession: "The inclusion of Internet Explorer with Windows at no separate charge increased general familiarity with the Internet and reduced the cost to the

public of gaining access to it, at least in part because it compelled Netscape to stop charging for Navigator." That is a monumental boon to consumers, and in his attempt to minimize it, Jackson can only come up with a list of minor and fragmentary inconveniences: clutter on the computer top, in an age when computer capacity is measured in gigabits; a slower opening of applications, when the speed of computers is increasing exponentially; the forcing of consumers to take Explorer when they would rather have no browser at all, when there must be just a hundred such people in existence. Where's the beef? All of these obstacles put together were not enormous enough to prevent AOL from gobbling up Netscape for a fancy price. None of them remotely justifies breaking up Microsoft, which will now have its hands full in trying to compete with the newer AOL-Time Warner. In a sense, Netscape has won: The present government suit condemns Microsoft to market immobility in an age of mergers. Is this the antitrust case of the millennium? Let's break up today's Chicago Bulls instead.

HOLMAN W. JENKINS JR.

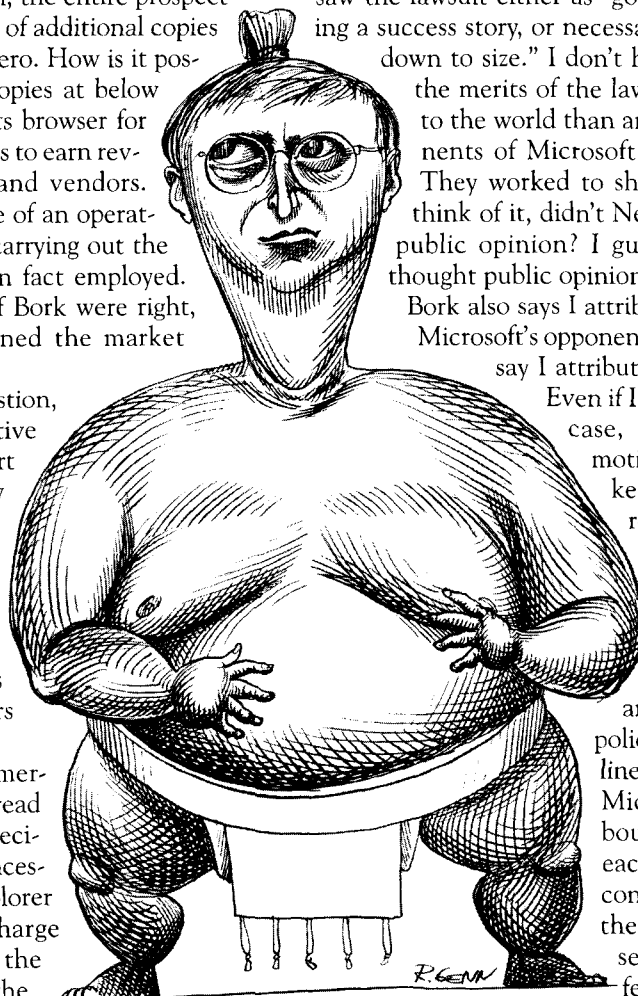
JUDGE Bork challenges my antitrust analysis, but I wasn't offering an antitrust analysis. I was musing on cultural aspects of the Microsoft case. It was the public, I said, that saw the lawsuit either as "government shamelessly attacking a success story, or necessarily cutting an object of envy down to size." I don't happen to agree with Bork on the merits of the lawsuit, but surely there is more to the world than antitrust arguments. The opponents of Microsoft did not just file legal briefs. They worked to shape public opinion. Come to think of it, didn't Netscape hire Bork to influence public opinion? I guess that's because Netscape thought public opinion was important.

Bork also says I attribute "discreditable motives" to Microsoft's opponents, but it would be more true to say I attribute "business motives" to them.

Even if I agreed with the merits of their case, I would suspect that their motives were based more on market imperatives than on legal reasoning.

For that matter, I might be tempted to agree with Bork that Microsoft risks some exposure under the antitrust laws and yet still believe that antitrust is a poor use of public policy. Intel has announced a new line of PC devices that don't use Microsoft software. AOL just bought up Time Warner. With each day that passes the kinds of concerns that were used to peddle the lawsuit to the larger public seem more ludicrous and far-fetched.

NR



Bill Gates by Roman Genn

■ LETTER FROM AL ■

Dear Friend:

Guess what? I'm still running for president!

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Gary, why on earth are you still running? Do you *really* think you stand a chance?"

Of course I do. I'm running neck-and-neck with Alan Keyes for a competitive fifth place in the Iowa Agricultural College Poli-Sci Department Winter Term Polling Course "Possible Voters' Third Possible Choice" Poll.

And surging!

But without your much-needed support, my candidacy doesn't stand a chance! You can help put America's Moral House in order by sending your non-tax-deductible contribution today. You'll receive an "It's the Hour for Bauer" bumper sticker and a copy of my autobiography, "I Was Never the Most Popular Kid in Class, but I Like to Think The Other Kids Respected Me."

Thanks for your support! Together, we can make a stand!

GARY BAUER

Dear Sir or Madam:

The fundamental choice we face—all of us, as a people and as a nation—is by what standard are we to judge ourselves, and by what standard are we to judge our works as a free people, who, in Jefferson's ideal, stood alone but connected to a higher power, to God—for let us not forget Him in our discussions here and elsewhere, for it is He who allows us this, the greatest experiment in freedom ever devised by man, and it is by His grace that we meet on the dais or the platform and debate the issues of the moment, forgetting, of course, that we have but one real issue that faces us, one challenge, one question, one battle ahead, and that is the battle for nothing less than the soul and spirit of this nation, and its cultural and moral renewal.

Thank you for your time.

AMBASSADOR ALAN KEYES

Dear Supporter:

It's down to the wire! The race is tightening! John McCain and I are battling it out for second, with George W. Bush faltering as the media-anointed front-runner.

But let's talk interest rates for a moment. Has it ever occurred to you that the Federal Reserve Bank—besides being an anti-constitutional body—has been levying a tax on working Americans with its policy of tight money for the past six quarters? And are you aware that the Depression-era Federal Home Loan Bank has itself raised its overnight borrowing rate *despite* the current steady London InterBank Overnight Rate? Should the Fed continue its tight-money policy? And isn't it crazy that the FHLB maintains a *higher* rate than the LIBOR?

A vision for America's future must include a vision for reconciling LIBOR with the outdated central-bank bias of the Fed governors!

I need your help!

Please send your financial support in the envelope provided! Send Washington a message!

STEVE FORBES

Hello Friend!

I sure do hope you and your family have been watching the Republican Presidential Primary Debates! If so, you've no doubt realized, along with much of the media, that it's a wide-open three-way race between me, my Senate colleague John McCain, and Governor George W. Bush.

A lot of people wondered, when I first declared my candidacy, what exactly I was up to. Heck, I even wondered myself.

But what I was up to, I think, was taking my detailed vision for America to the people.

But with a twist.

As you no doubt know, I have been a singer/songwriter longer than I've been a politician! So for the first time, I've decided to merge my two interests (America's future and inspirational music) in a double-disc CD entitled "Me 'n' America 'n' You 'n' Our Love." Your campaign contribution of \$50 or more gets you this very special collection. A contribution of \$500 gets you a private in-person concert. For the maximum-allowable contribution of \$1000, you do not have to attend the in-person concert.

In a recent debate, I suggested that the group of us—me, George, John, and the also-rans—get in a big old bus and drive around Iowa and New Hampshire for a series of debates. I even promised to provide all the musical entertainment. I got no takers.

When I promised to provide *none* of the musical entertainment, some of the also-rans said okay. But isn't it interesting that none of my other co-front-runners took me up on it? Even when I promised not to sing? What are they afraid of, friend? A little inspirational music?

They're afraid of what the media are calling the "Hatch Attack!" I'm gaining momentum, friend, but I need your help! Please, send whatever you can!

Musically yours,

SENATOR ORRIN HATCH

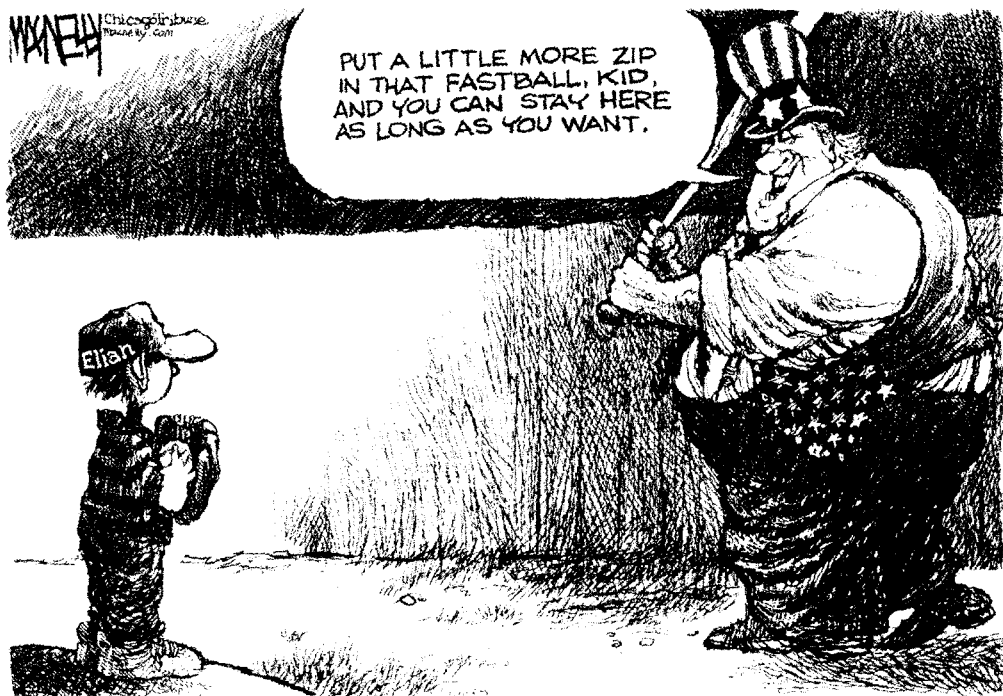
Dear Sir or Madam:

Several days ago, you perhaps received from me a missive that took as its central theme the moral and cultural renewal of this nation. It slipped my mind, at the time, to include the usual requests for much-needed financial support, in whichever denomination you choose as a free person. I do so now.

Yours and etc.

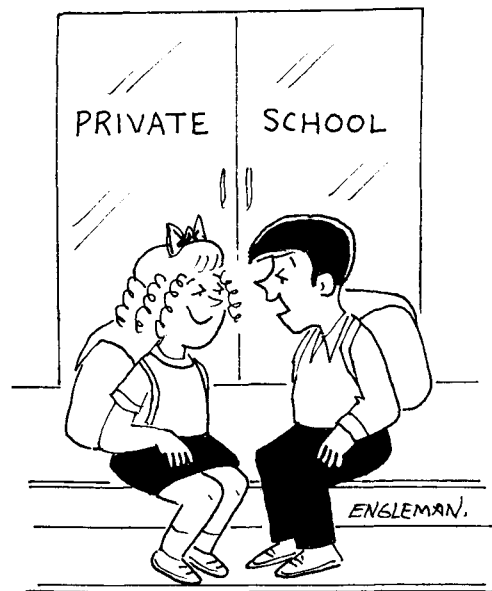
AMBASSADOR ALAN KEYES

HELP!!!!





"Nasty, brutish, and short—any other questions?"



"Just think, if it hadn't been for vouchers,
we might never have met."



"Hey, count your blessings—just imagine what it'd
be like if politicians weren't incompetent."

BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

A Low, Dishonest Decade

JOHN PODHORETZ

How We Got Here: The 70's: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse), by David Frum (Basic Books, 481 pp., \$25)

IN his introduction to *Eminent Victorians*, Lytton Strachey opines that, "if he is wise," any chronicler of recent events "will attack his subject in unexpected places; he will fall upon the flank, or the rear, he will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hitherto undivined. He will row out over the great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity."

That is exactly what David Frum has done in *How We Got Here*. Frum's extraordinary new book is to the writing of contemporary American history what Strachey's 1918 work was to the genteel biographical tomes of its day—an audacious act of revisionism, written in a voice and style so original it deserves to be called revolutionary. The author of *Dead Right* and frequent contributor to conservative journals both here and in Canada, Frum has taken a huge leap forward as a writer with a compulsively readable and effortlessly commanding amalgam of history, sociology, and polemic.

The book's mile-long subtitle is *The*

Mr. Podhoretz's column on the 2000 campaign appears in the *New York Post*.



Jimmy Carter by Roman Gern

70's: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse). Frum begins with the important observation that the restructuring of American society, for which the 1960s are usually given the credit and blame, actually took place during the 1970s. The cause of this change, Frum believes, was the country's loss of trust in its institutions at every level of society. This loss of trust was entirely justifiable, in his view. From the cocooning mega-corporations that began to make substandard goods to the White Houses that misused the powers of the presidency in the pettiest and most indefensible ways, American "institutions and laws formed by a century of war and the preparation for war" proved themselves ill suited to running a nation that was at risk not of military invasion but of spiritual, political, and economic suicide.

The overhaul of America in the 1970s "was a revolution not so much against institutions as against the cool, methodical habits of mind underlying those institutions." After all, those "cool, methodical habits of mind" were responsible for horrors like slum clearance, which replaced the tenement neighborhoods of old with the nightmarish housing-project wastelands of the New. But,

Frum notes sadly, "like all revolutions, this one attacked what was good in the old regime of rational thought just as fiercely as it attacked the bad: ideas of serious scholarship just as much as the excesses of Bauhaus architecture; orthodox religious faith as much as the planned economy."

That passage offers a glimpse of the book's unique flavor. Frum can range from the helium-light precincts of pop culture to the obscure regulations undergirding wage-and-price controls without putting lead in the helium or making the complex simplistic. *How We Got Here* is the sort of book that will bedevil those who like to underline its author's salient or trenchant comments, because they will have to resist the temptation to run their yellow highlighters through every other sentence.

Though he writes from the perspective of a conservative (actually, given Frum's Canadian origins, one might more precisely call him a Tory, albeit a very "dry" one) and his work is an analysis of a decade in which liberalism ran rampant, Frum does not revisit the 1970s to bury them. Far from it. He makes the bold claim that the painful lessons America learned in the 1970s helped teach us how to find renewed purpose and vigor in the two decades that followed:

America won the cold war, pioneered the computer revolution, squelched inflation, and suppressed crime, yes, but only because it first underwent a decade and a half of suffering and humiliation. Those years were daunting and frightening because habits and institutions that had worked brilliantly for half a century suddenly sputtered. . . . Then [Americans] recouped. They rethought. They reinvented. They rediscovered in their own past the governing principles of their future. Out of the failure and trauma of the 1970s they emerged stronger, richer and—if it is

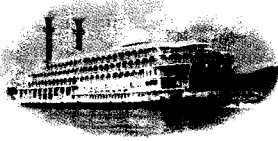
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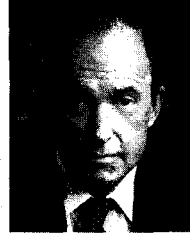
William F. Buckley Jr.



Robert Bork



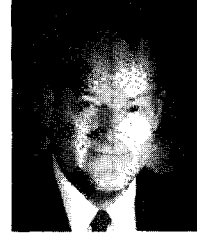
José Piñera



Lawrence Kudlow



Stephen Moore



James C. Miller III

ALSO: RICH LOWRY, RAMESH PONNURU, ED CAPANO, DUSTY RHODES; OTHER INVITES COMING
NEW GUEST: AMERITRADE CHAIRMAN AND CEO JOE RICKETTS



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The theme will be economics, a topic many *NR* cruise alumni (there are over 1,500, and many return again and again!) have demanded. Joining **Bill Buckley**, Editor **Rich Lowry**, Senior Editor **Ramesh Ponnuru**, President **Dusty Rhodes**, and Publisher **Ed Capano** to discuss taxes, fiscal policy, trade, the Fed, budgets, and other money matters is an all-star lineup: Judge **Robert Bork** (who will discuss the mega-implications federal case against Microsoft), former *NR* economics editor **Larry Kudlow**, Cato Institute tax- and fiscal-policy guru **Steve Moore**, former Reagan administration budget chief and Federal Trade Commission chairman **Jim Miller**, **José Piñera**, the man responsible for privatizing Chile's Social Security system (it's sending policy shock waves around the globe!), and **Joe Ricketts**, chairman and CEO of Ameritrade, one of America's hottest investment firms. And there are more "outstanding" invitations to outstanding conservative celebrities.

This special *NR* cruise will feature our usual winning program: five exclusive seminars where our editors and guest speakers will discuss "dismal-science" issues, two private cocktail receptions, two private late-night "smokers," (featuring **H. Upmann's** world-class cigars!), and intimate dining with *NR* editors and speakers. All this will be in addition to the fantastic and luxurious travel experience awaiting you on the opulent *American Queen*, a seafaring architectural gem that is renowned for providing its passengers with a relaxing and rewarding means of seeing America's colorful and historic "Old South" along America's mightiest of waterways (the "AQ" is also renowned for its great regional food, fantastic entertainment, and beautiful accommodations).

The only bad thing we can say about the *National Review* 2000 Mississippi Cruise is that it's limited: Given the *American Queen's* intimate size, we can offer only 100 cabins. Already, 95 have been reserved—the 5 remaining cabins will be gone ASAP! Prices start at only \$2,965. Don't delay: Call 1-800-707-1634 to order your free *National Review* Cruise Information Kit.



Watch America gently roll by with friends old and new on the AQ's "Front Porch." It's just one of many amenities on this wonderful ship.



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not overdramatic to say so—greater than ever.

The most obvious change wrought by the 1970s was the libertinism that rose in conjunction with the liberation of sex from the shackles of law and tradition. After a précis of the court decisions that effectively ended two centuries of the legislation of sexual morality, Frum sums up: "Every era tacitly places one liberty ahead of all others; one that must always prevail when values conflict. For late 18th-century Americans, that liberty was freedom of religion. For late 19th-century Americans, it was the right to own and dispose of property. For late 20th-century Americans, it is sexual freedom." One of the many unintended consequences was the devastation done to marriage: As the 1970s progressed, Frum writes, "a once-universal institution was dwindling into a middle-class idiosyncrasy, like bottled water or cotton shirts."

One of the chief causes of its dwindling status was the Supreme Court, which "one by one struck down laws that distinguished between the offspring of wed and unwed unions, explicitly repudiating in 1977 an argument that states had any legitimate interest in buttressing 'legitimate family relationships.'" In that same year, Frum notes, "a major survey by the Centers for Disease Control found that children born out of wedlock were 250 percent more likely to be abused than children born to married parents, but as far as the Court was concerned, illegitimacy was not a vast social crisis in the making. It was just another lifestyle choice."

Today, we fret over illegitimacy and hammer into American youth the health risks associated with sex, and Frum does say that "the compulsive promiscuity of the 1970s has subsided." But, he says, "it is very wrong to think of the sexual history of the past 40 years as the swinging of the pendulum from restraint to license and then back to restraint again. The 1970s blew to smithereens an entire structure of sexual morality. Revolutions like that do not last forever. They cannot. But the ending of a revolution is not the same thing as the restoration of the old order. It is the institutionalization of a new one."

The institutionalization of the new order owed not a little to the democratization in the 1970s of post-Freudian ideas about the human psyche. Europeans such as Freud—who witnessed the slow collapse of their continent into war and tyranny—were horrified by the idea of letting loose the shackles from mankind, but "as psychotherapy was Americanized, all [its] Central European anxieties were dismissed as outdated gloom. The mind did not resemble Dracula's castle, with horrors unimaginable chained in its dungeons; it was like

■

**'Was it surprising that
a country whose government
had decided to treat its people
like subjects should find that
those same people no longer
felt themselves to be citizens?'**

■

a Santa Monica sea house whose windows had become a little grimy. Polish them up, let the outside in and the inside out, and the owners will once again enjoy the sunlight."

But as emotions increasingly held sway and the country lost faith in the promise of rational stewardship by highly educated éminences grises, it began to embrace irrationality as never before. Americans turned in massive numbers to spoon-bending magicians like Uri Geller, who claimed to possess genuine psychic powers, and ridiculous theories about interplanetary visits spun by the Swiss hotelier Erich von Daniken. And, more worrisome, they became prey to frights, frenzies, and scares about their health and the environment even as they grew healthier and the environment less toxic.

"Scarcely a year would pass between 1969 and 1982 without a major food and drug scare: cyclamates in 1969, hormones in beef in 1972, nitrites the same year, red dye number two in 1976, hair dyes and saccharin in 1977, coffee in 1981," Frum writes. He reminds us that in the 1970s, Americans were told and told and told again that the world was on the verge of entering a new Ice Age, and then makes this fascinating connec-

tion: "The most quoted Ice Age alarmist of the 1970s—Stephen Schneider—became, in a neat public-relations pivot, one of the most quoted global warming alarmists of the 1990s."

The case of Stephen Schneider demonstrates that "it was less important to the new apocalyptics to know which catastrophe was going to ravage the world than to agree that some catastrophe was sure to do so."

The spirit of catastrophism made itself felt in the world of religion as well. Frum observes that while the best-selling religious tome of the 1950s was Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*, in the 1970s it was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a terrifying vision that might have been called *Apocalypse Soon*. Lindsey's popularization of the Book of Revelation hit tens of millions of Americans with the force of prophecy at the same time liberalism became the dominant creed of the mainline Protestant denominations that had formerly dominated American religious life. Women and homosexuals donned the cloth, in keeping with the liberationist ethos. But "to the manifest bafflement of the mainline Protestants, the bold reforms failed to halt the decline in membership. Women bishops followed women priests; acoustic guitars were replaced by electric guitars; ministers ascended to ever loftier peaks of grooviness; racism replaced pride as sin number one; and still the pews emptied, gifts dried up, and vocations diminished."

No, God was not dead. He had, in Frum's reckoning, just moved from Connecticut to Dallas. The explosion in numbers of the evangelical and Pentecostalist movements in the United States testified to the nation's spiritual yearnings. But, Frum believes, born-again Christianity wasn't really a reaction to the 1970s so much as an offshoot of the decade. Many of its churches "offered a more intense and fulfilling emotional experience at a minimum, and in many cases miraculous healings and solutions to personal problems." Frum sternly discerns in born-again eschatology a "shift from an ethic of rectitude to an ethic of forgiveness," and says of Americans in the 1970s in general: "They hungered for religion's sweets, but rejected religion's discipline; wanted its help in trouble but not the strictures



that might have kept them out of trouble; expected its ecstasy but rejected its ethics; demanded salvation, but rejected the harsh, antique dichotomy of right and wrong."

Americans had particular reason to seek salvation, because so much was going wrong here. The country suffered an endless series of blows in the 1970s. A war was lost. Inflation spiraled out of control owing to political cowardice and economic blindness. Wage-and-price controls were imposed, and when they didn't work, they were tightened still further. The policy of forced busing tore cities to ribbons and undid 20 years of civil-rights progress.

There was a crisis in governance because the public correctly believed it was progressively becoming disenfranchised:

People felt that their views did not much count because in fact *their views did not much count*. . . . For a decade, power had been massively and systematically transferred from elective branches of government, where it could be controlled, to non-elective branches, where it could not. Power flowed from prominent and visible officials to a multiplicity of the obscure and invisible. Was it surprising that a country whose government had decided to treat its people like subjects should find that those same people no longer felt themselves to be citizens?

Thus rose the grass-roots warriors, people like Phyllis Schlafly and Howard Jarvis, whose ability to rally millions against the Equal Rights Amendment (in Schlafly's case) and property taxes (in Jarvis's) indicated that Americans were not ready to throw in the towel—that they were willing to fight for what they believed and not to be bullied into thinking they didn't deserve what they owned.

Ronald Reagan's election was only moments away, and would bring a low, dishonest decade to a happy close. But, Frum says, "Americans were not returning to the era of laissez-faire. Rugged individualism no longer swayed them. But neither did the social democratic ethos of the middle years of this century. Americans were moving on to something new, a creed that blended the antique ideal of self-reliance with a soft sense of entitlement, providing one made some minimal effort on one's own behalf."

Frum doesn't engage in the trite, false

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technique so beloved of “10-years-in-600-pages” hackwork like David Halberstam’s, in which the events of an entire decade are viewed through the eyes of a few supposedly representative Americans. *How We Got Here* is a macrohistory, an indelible portrait of America from above, whose author uses a zoom lens on occasion to offer a tight shot of a moment in time when a huge and infinitely variegated country changed suddenly, dramatically, and permanently in ways we are still struggling to understand. **NR**

The Trouble with Stanley

HARVEY C. MANSFIELD

The Trouble with Principle, by Stanley Fish (Harvard, 328 pp., \$24.95)

THE trouble with principle, we learn from Stanley Fish, is that it does not necessarily accord with what we like. And when it doesn’t, instead of sacrificing our desires to principle—as we should—we sacrifice principle to our desires.

It’s not a new point, but Fish, a man of the Left, uses it mainly to attack the stance of liberals toward religion. His book is a collection of previously published articles, all lively polemics employed against professors who do not write as plainly as he does. His opponents are liberals who concoct theories about how to treat people who are not as liberal as they are. Should liberals talk to them, give them a place at the table, deliberate with them? Fish puts his finger on the sore point: Should religious believers, who reject the ultimate authority of reason, be included in debates in which reason is the norm? Isn’t someone who speaks from his faith instead of his reason making an unjustified, special, privileged claim, one that willfully excludes others?

Liberals today are constantly manu-

Mr. Mansfield is a professor of government at Harvard.

facturing theories of toleration or freedom of religion that they claim are neutral among all sects. But in fact, Fish shows, religious believers cannot accept them without abandoning or trivializing their beliefs. So while pretending to be tolerant or “inclusive,” as liberals like to say these days, these theories are actually intolerant and exclusive. And this is so not only because they are weak—Fish makes easy sport of them—but more generally because no principle can succeed in checking the partisan agenda or “naked preference” that inspired it. It’s impossible to be principled or consistent. Being consistent requires you to abstract from what is good for you at the moment, but you cannot do that. Most everybody believes in consistency, Fish admits, but nobody practices it.

This is my first experience with Stanley Fish. Years ago when I first heard of him, I asked who he was. The answer came that Stanley Fish would not have cared for that question. One was supposed to know who he was without asking. I have since learned that he is indeed a big name I should have known—a man of parts with a steep upward trajectory. He began his career as a professor of English, and a Milton scholar. This was not grand enough for him, however, and aided by the laxity of our age and especially of our universities, he became a chairman, a law professor, and a mover and shaker both at supercool Duke University and in his profession. The latest is that he has been made a dean at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

A sign of his prominence is that he relies on himself and doesn’t seem to need to drop names like Foucault and Derrida, authors of deconstructionist theories that resemble his argument. Perhaps in ignoring his fellow postmoderns Fish is being consistent with his attack on those who propagate theories: He is consistent with his attack on consistency. Or perhaps he wants to be free to be inconsistent, so as to be consistent with his own theory—or is it a non-theory? Fish is a cleverish fellow, and he invites cleverishness in return. But let us look more soberly at the danger he represents.

It is not that Fish is a fiend of some kind. He is, on the contrary, a nice guy whom easy success has left naïve about the world—at bottom, a typical American academic. When he speaks of living

by your “naked preference,” he refers to liberal professors and their foolish causes, not to tyrants who mean evil. When he takes his stand with Machiavelli (as he does), he pays no attention to Machiavelli’s recommendation of fraud and cruelty for those who want to live by naked truth. When Fish says, “I historicize reason,” he does not mean, “I twist it to mean what I want.” Although he exposes liberal toleration as a cover for coercion and exclusion, he himself has no program for repression and extermination.

Rather than being a powerful tyrant masquerading as a dean, Fish, one could almost conclude, has no politics at all. In the grossest contradiction in his book, he claims on the one hand that nothing follows from accepting his argument, and asserts on the other that the same

■
After arguing that principles are really nothing but rhetoric, Fish concludes that reality too yields to rhetoric.
■

argument releases his desire to win from the constraint of seeming to be neutral. What is the “freedom to win” that Fish discovers—not one of FDR’s Four Freedoms!—but a political consequence of his argument? One would want to know how the freedom to win is made compatible with government by consent of the governed, but that little matter is not raised. It is enough that Fish does not want to become a tyrant; we should be happy with that. So, anticipating our gratitude, he feels free to despise our constitutional limits on tyranny. He happens to be “situated” as a dean, and what office could be further from tyranny than that one? Incidentally, when Fish likes the way things are, he calls it a “situation”; when he doesn’t, he calls it the “status quo.”

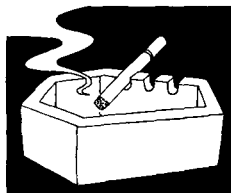
Now, what does it mean when Stanley Fish says we are all “situated”? It means that human beings are always, and only, in a context of contingent and changing circumstances. We have no capacity to rise above or abstract from that context; we can only replace one context with another one. We cannot be objective or

rational or universal; we use our reason only to advance our own interests and to fool or befuddle others. Hence we are always politically situated, having friends who help us and enemies who are in the way. Nobody is disinterested or neutral. No occupation or way of thinking is nonpolitical. Everything is "politics all the way down."

Here Fish shows himself to be as naïve morally and philosophically as he is politically. Just as his naughtiness falls pathetically short of tyranny, so does his skepticism fail to sustain its doubt of abstraction. He bravely denies that anything is good or right beyond the given moment when you feel it so, but then he turns submissive and cravenly swallows terms and concepts he should object to. When he criticizes liberal principles, he says they lack substance or content. But "substance" and "content" are metaphysical abstractions to which he, as a deconstructionist, is not entitled. If what we want changes from moment to moment, then there is no enduring self—which means no self-interest, no preferences, only momentary whims. Fish likes to confront presumptuous liberal principles with "reality," but what is reality? How did that get an exemption from politics all the way down?

In truth, Fish lives on a basis of simulacra—copies of which there is no original. Let's dismiss abstractions as unreal, he says, and then let's pretend they exist anyway in our cozy "interpretive community." For after denying the possibility of a common good, Fish posits—declares on his own—the possibility of a community if only its members will say there's a common good.

Such a community of professors and graduate students will no doubt have to be supplemented with sales clerks, garbage men, construction workers, and others, each group with its own exquisite mechanism for interpreting, at any moment, the ordinary goods of life. After arguing that principles are really nothing but rhetoric, Fish concludes that reality too yields to rhetoric. He is confident that any community can survive as long as it continues to agree. Should any difficulty arise, just call out the most significant interpreters to dispel it. It is not as if any necessity could arise—a war, a disaster, or merely a lack of food on the



table—that would not yield to rhetoric or interpretation.

In reading this book, I worried constantly as to whether it had any hidden depths. Was Stanley Fish perhaps lying? Was there a message or a lesson underneath the surface? But I concluded that the book is all surface, all the way down. It's true that Fish has an overdrive to his argument, a postmodern self-awareness into which he sometimes shifts when he wants to be clever. He will anticipate that you will turn his argument against him, and he will help you do it in the belief that if he refutes himself, it doesn't count as a refutation. Fish is stuck in a context, he says, but somehow, despite all his talk of being embedded and situated, he thinks he is on top of the world.

There is a certain amount of fun in watching Fish go after pretentious liberal theorists. It's easy to join in the laugh as he exposes their clumsy tricks. He shows how theorists of "democratic discourse" contrive in their utopian schemes to lay down conditions of entry into political debate so that nobody who seriously disagrees with them can even begin talking. Very tolerant! But this objection to liberalism's formal principles is nothing new and not decisive.

Conservatives, in particular, should not stand by in amusement as people like Fish attack liberal principles. Conservatives have a stake in liberalism in the generic sense; certainly American conservatives cannot ignore the liberalism of the Declaration of Independence. And besides, Fish and his like have it in for all principles, including conservative ones.

Originally, in the 17th century, liberalism did not promote neutrality for its own sake. It tried to teach us to think neutrally and abstractly for the sake of a certain, definite good. It wanted us to put peace ahead of glory and salvation, thus to substitute a lower, more solid good for a rarer, more contentious goal. Later liberalism, in Kant and Mill, sought to ennoble the mere attainment of peace by demanding that self-interest in the material sense be replaced by moral self-development.

Here are two issues raised by liberalism, very relevant today, that all of us need to think about. They are far from being meaningless disputes, such as Fish

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associates with liberalism. They are matters of choice; they are not settled for us by our situation. They are matters of principle, to be taken up responsibly and not to be decided merely for a single set of circumstances. It's true that it's easier to show that we need principles than that we have them—which is my sole concession to Dean Fish. But it's also true that the need must be admitted, and the search to satisfy it begun over and over again. There's something human about our dissatisfaction with being situated. **NR**

The Family Business

FRANCIS X. ROCCA

Between Father and Son: Family Letters, by V. S. Naipaul, edited by Gillon Aitken (Knopf, 285 pp., \$26)

‘YOU HAVE ENOUGH MATERIAL FOR A HUNDRED STORIES. FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE START WRITING THEM. YOU CAN WRITE AND YOU KNOW IT. STOP MAKING EXCUSES. . . I HATE LECTURING YOU THIS WAY BUT I WANT TO HEAR THAT YOU ARE WRITING. I WANT TO HEAR THAT YOU ARE WRITING VERY VERY MUCH. YOU HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY IDLE TOO LONG.’

This is just the sort of message that an 18-year-old aspiring writer ought to get from his father, especially a father with years of newspaper reporting and over a dozen short stories under his belt. But here the advice is going in the opposite direction: from Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, Oxford undergraduate, to Seepersad Naipaul, reporter for the *Trinidad Guardian* and author of the unpublished novel *The Adventures of Gurudeva*.

Again and again in *Between Father and Son*, a collection of letters written mostly between 1949 and 1953, young “Vido” exhorts “Pa” with a passion

Mr. Rocca is a writer in Vincenza, Italy.

equaled only by his own hunger for literary glory. “You are not frightfully old,” he assures him, invoking the late-bloomers G. B. Shaw and Joyce Cary. After the elder Naipaul’s heart attack leaves him bedridden and the paper sacks him, the younger vows to quit university, take a high-paying job, and bring his father from Trinidad to live with him in England, where he will have nothing to do but drink whiskey and write.

Such a twist on the familiar pattern of a parent who projects his ambition onto his child would be interesting even if it didn’t concern one of the English language’s most esteemed living authors. The anxiety not only to succeed but to spring from success—to be Somebody, and the son of Somebody too—seems all the more significant in a writer who has called himself a “new man” without literary antecedents, and whose work is preoccupied with questions of roots and identity.

V. S. Naipaul is most widely known for his travel writing, including *India: A Million Mutinies Now*; *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey*; and *The Return of Eva Peron with The Killings in Trinidad*. His novels and short stories focus on the post-colonial world, notably Africa (*A Bend in the River*; *In a Free State*) and the Caribbean (*Guerillas*; *A Way in the World*), and many of them share with his nonfiction the themes of ethnicity, alienation, and ideological violence. In spare and pitiless prose he examines the Third World and its uneasy, unbreakable relationship with the First, from the perspective of one with strong ties to both.

The last account of Naipaul as man and writer was Paul Theroux’s bitter and brilliant 1998 memoir *Sir Vidia’s Shadow*, which told the story of the two authors’ former friendship—a friendship conducted largely through the mail. Written without the cooperation of its subject, that book portrayed Naipaul as an inspiring mentor, and a fascinating conversationalist and correspondent. It also described him as fussy, insecure, selfish, pretentious, and at times cruel. *Between Father and Son* is of course written largely by Naipaul himself, and published with what its editor calls “his characteristically discreet approval.” Yet emerging from the letters

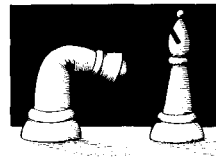
is an image of the man that matches, in some respects all too well, the version offered by Theroux.

The letters begin just before Vido, a descendant of Indian immigrants, leaves the British colony of Trinidad for the mother country, his main possession a university scholarship. His dispatches home recount efforts to conquer Oxford and become a famous writer as soon as possible: reporting for one university magazine and running another, leading busy social and romantic lives, playing

‘In a way I had always looked upon my life as a continuation of his,’ the young V. S. Naipaul wrote of his father, ‘a continuation which, I hoped, would also be a fulfillment.’

cricket, working on a farm during summer vacation, writing a novel and many short stories, and (almost incidentally) earning a degree in English literature. He refines his table manners and his French pronunciation, and cultivates luxurious tastes: “I have also acquired the habit of having tea in restaurants and coffee at 11 P.M. in the Randolph, Oxford’s most expensive Queen’s Park hotel, where the coffee costs a shilling at a time!”

Our impression of Vido as a young man on the make—frankly eager to befriend “people who could be useful to me later on”—is tempered by the knowledge that he is his family’s best hope for escaping poverty. Nor is it strange that a socially ambitious colonial should ape the prejudices of the English ruling class, and Vido does so with a vengeance. He reserves special contempt for his fellow Trinidadians, savaging one as “so utterly ugly, so utterly crass—low forehead, square, fat face, thick lips, wavy hair combed straight back,” and worst of all improperly dressed: “Wearing the blazer of the Caroni Cricket Club in Oxford. I ask you—can you conceive of anything narrower and stupider?” In the midst of this nastiness, the ever-acute Vido makes a more interesting point about the provin-



cialism of the typical member of the island's elite: "The bigger issues of global injustice and global wrongs do not appeal to his mind. Everything begins and ends with Trinidad."

With apparently unshakable self-confidence, young Vido routinely deems his own work "excellent." Yet around the time his first novel is rejected he undergoes a "nervous breakdown" that lasts the better part of two years. "I had looked upon myself as



a failure; yet was never willing to admit this fear," Vido confesses to Pa. In an effort to cure himself Vido takes a trip to Spain, the occasion for an early example of his travel writing, already marked by the unsparing descriptions ("a plump, oily man, middle-aged and with hair scattered sparsely around a shining, almost bald pate") and uncommon opinions (Madrid is "a beautiful city . . . I prefer Madrid to Paris") that are his signature. The expense of this journey forces him once again, and not for the last time, to postpone a visit to Trinidad. His father sends him a copy of a self-help book titled *You and Your Nerves*.

With five children at home (including the future writer Shiva Naipaul, now deceased) and another older child (Vido's sister Kamla) at university in India, Pa can spare only small presents of money, plus the occasional shipment of grapefruit juice, socks, and Trinidadian cigarettes. The most valuable things he sends are his own words.

"I believe the 'open sesame' is the practice of indifference—indifference as to results after you have done your best, quietly, coolly," writes Pa to a Vido frustrated by hard-to-please student editors. When the young man is daunted by an assigned article of broad scope, his father instructs him to "begin anywhere and say something on one aspect—then go on to another aspect; and so on and on—step by step. You will not have dealt with the story exhaustively: nobody does that, you know; yet whatever you'd have written would have had a completeness." When his son asserts that being hated is the sign of a good journalist, Pa gently corrects him: "A man is doing his work well when people begin *liking him*," as a result of his writing sympathetically. (This last precept is one that the caustic V. S. Naipaul obviously chose to reject.)

Pa also dispenses more common pater-

nal injunctions, including the all-time classic: Write home more often. Vido fitfully complies, but ignores the advice to avoid white girls in favor of Indians. Pa is especially anxious that Vido not marry until after his career is under way, a concern rooted in the older man's own too-early marriage and fatherhood. Weighed down by his responsibilities, Seepersad wistfully ponders what he might accomplish with six uninterrupted months of writing time, and laments the opportunities closed to him—an attitude that only exasperates his energetic son.

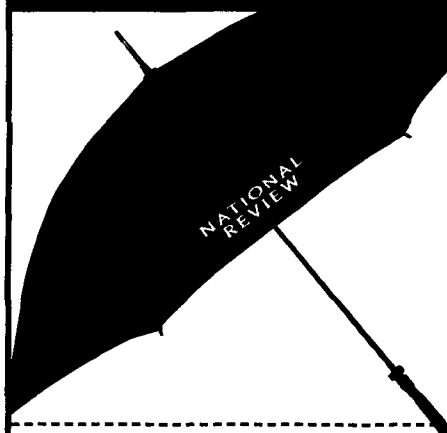
I can't write "half as well as you," Vido insists to Pa. (According to Theroux, the only writer V. S. Naipaul has acknowledged as a literary influence is his father.) At one point Vido reads one of Pa's short stories over the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*, a program that the family strains to hear through static-filled short-wave transmissions, and for which Vido himself also writes. Pa proposes that the two publish their stories in a combined collection. That collaboration does not come to pass, but Pa urges his son: "As soon as you can, get

working on a novel," and makes the jocular suggestion, "If you are at a loss for a theme, take me for it."

In fact Vido would do just that, in his masterpiece *A House for Mr. Biswas*, published in 1961. Throughout this correspondence we glimpse that novel's source material in the life of father, son, or both. After Vido reports his nervous breakdown, Pa commiserates by recalling a similar ordeal of his own. The two experiences combine in that of the fictional Mohun Biswas, whose crisis in an isolated rural shack is one of the book's most haunting episodes. Few sons have paid such eloquent and wholehearted tribute to their fathers. Yet this tribute was one its subject never enjoyed, having died in 1953, at 47 years of age.

"In a way I had always looked upon my life as a continuation of his," Vido wrote to his mother shortly afterwards, "a continuation which, I hoped, would also be a fulfillment. It still is . . ." These letters record Seepersad Naipaul's generosity to his family with advice, encouragement, and material support. To his eldest son, they show, he gave something even rarer: a sense of purpose. **NR**

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Gandhi Lite

KANCHAN LIMAYE

The Cost of Living, by Arundhati Roy
(Modern Library, 126 pp., \$11.95)

Americans know Arundhati Roy as the attractive young author of *The God of Small Things* (1997), an elegantly written first novel about a pair of twins growing up in a village in southern India. As one of a cadre of Indian writers that includes Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Kiran Desai, and Shashi Tharoor, Roy has earned fame in the West by writing about an exoticized East. Her book—an instant popular and critical success—received glowing reviews, winning the U.K.'s prestigious Booker prize and becoming an American bestseller.

As a writer, Roy's great talent lies in spinning lush, lyrical prose about human relations, and thereby drawing out the significance of "small things." One of the novel's central passages depicts the forbidden inter-caste romance between Velutha, a handsome "Untouchable," and Ammu, a factory-owner's daughter: "They knew there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things. They laughed at the ant-bites on each other's bottoms. At clumsy caterpillars sliding off the ends of leaves. At overturned beetles that couldn't right themselves . . . at a particularly devout praying mantis."

Roy's fellow Indians, however, know her not as a darkly ringleted exotic with a gift for musical prose but as their own Emile Zola—a writer-activist whose controversial views are a national scandal and whose progressive political impulses drive her fiction. Roy's taboo-busting portrayal of inter-caste love became a cause célèbre in her homeland, actually prompting an offended citizen to sue her. Now the anti-

Miss Limaye is a New York-based writer for *Reason*, *American Arts Quarterly*, and *The Classicist*.

development slant of her new screed, *The Cost of Living*, has provoked the Indian Supreme Court to consider legal action, and sent enraged Gujaratis marching through the streets on book-burning sprees. It has also made her the latest darling of the anti-American Left.

Comprised of two essays previously published in Indian magazines, *The Cost of Living* attacks the wasteful follies of internationally financed Third World development. In the first essay, "The Greater Common Good," Roy deplores the many Big Dam projects India has adopted in the 50 years since Independence. In the second, "The End of

A brand-name celebrity crusades for causes she only partly understands.

Imagination," she condemns India's May 1998 detonation of the nuclear bomb. In a way that will no doubt delight her fans, Roy unfurls the lyrical imagery and child's-eye view characteristic of her novel—children scamper across Indian farmland like "motorized peanuts" and whatnot. But alas, suggestive imagery is no substitute for sound journalism. Roy repeatedly enjoins the reader, "come with me and hear my story," but in place of a narrative grounded in human experience is cranky fulmination. She throws development statistics at us like a manic pitcher hurling curve balls. Ultimately, *The Cost of Living* congeals into a verbal mishmash of mystical environmentalism, anti-development rhetoric, and small-is-beautiful musings.

Roy's lack of journalistic skill doesn't invalidate her cause, of course. Big Dams were supposed to irrigate India's cities and enable land to bear new cash crops. Instead, they've displaced 33 million people, most of them illiterate farmers, shepherds, and fisher-folk who depend on the land for their livelihood. The Indian government doesn't bother systematically to find these people new homes, so they seek work as urban laborers or menial servants in dam-builders' houses. Many starve and die. Roy points out indignantly that while the West is convulsed over the future of 1 million

Kosovar refugees, 50 times that number have already been displaced in India thanks to these hubristic projects. Nor is India alone: The dams cause wreckage wherever they're built—in China, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Brazil, and Guatemala. Roy cites several examples of Big Dam disasters to establish their bad track record—a record the Indian government conceals behind shifting statistics. Though she cramps her argument with tedious passages straight out of an engineering textbook, she concludes eloquently: "To slow a beast, you break its limbs. To slow a nation, you break its people. You rob them of volition. Day by day . . . we are being broken."

Eloquence devolves into raving in Roy's second essay, "The End of Imagination," where she succumbs to the kind of crude anti-American rhetoric that has long been a tired old refrain. "Colonialism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, germ warfare, chemical weapons, they (the West) virtually invented it all," she shrieks. "They have plundered nations, snuffed out civilizations, exterminated entire populations." The very worst of these inventions, the nuclear bomb, "is the most anti-human, antinational, antidemocratic, outright evil thing that man has ever made." Nuclear weapons "pervade our thinking. Control our behavior. Inform our dreams. They bury themselves like meat-hooks in the base of our brains." In vivid prose Roy conjures a world devastated by nuclear winter: "What shall we do then, those of us who are still alive? Burned and bald and blind and ill, carrying the cancerous carcasses of our children in our arms?"

Who is to blame for unleashing this apocalyptic nightmare on the world? America, of course. ("Come on up here, folks," she taunts, "stand up and take a bow.") Roy blames the U.S. for opening the nuclear Pandora's Box without pausing to ask, for example, whether the outcome might not have been worse for the world had the totalitarians won the race to develop it first. Instead she deploys postmodern metaphors that may endear her to the academic Left but risk alienating her American readers, calling nuclear weapons "the ultimate colonizer, whiter than any white man that

ever lived, the very heart of whiteness."

Roy has long posed as a caste-traversing "woman of the people"—the Gandhi-inspired Indian version of '60s-style radical chic. In the mid '90s, she wrote an essay, "The Great Indian Rape Trick," which excoriated film director Shekhar Kapur for exploiting in his movie *Bandit Queen* the life of a Dacoit tribal woman who reportedly murdered the men who had raped her. Since then, Roy has donated money for the cultivation of "Untouchable" literature and organized a week-long Big Dam protest while telling journalists, "I'm not well educated, like Vik Seth or Salman Rushdie." Yet she is a well-born, educated member of India's elite who has feasted on Shakespeare, Dickens, Joyce, and Nabokov since childhood.

Given her obvious penchant for myth, it's no surprise that Roy excels more at poetic rumination than reasoned argument. Indeed, both essays in *The Cost of Living* exemplify the problems that can result when writers of fiction take up political causes. Like Günter Grass and Norman Mailer, Roy has neglected the development of her literary talents in the pursuit of broader influence as an *engagée* woman of letters. But the illogical, disorganized nature of her rants makes it hard to take her seriously as a public intellectual. Roy ends up less resembling Emile Zola than Bill Gates or Audrey Hepburn: a brand-name celebrity crusading for causes (AIDS, children) she only partly understands.

At one point the author rhapsodizes as beautifully as a woodthrush about the only dream worth having: "To love. To be loved. To never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair . . . to respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away." This is her vocation and true cause: the one that has chosen her, not vice versa. She would do well to pursue it through fiction, hunkering down in a Vermont cabin or a Goan beach-house to re-examine her short book for the neglected seeds of stories that lie embedded there like semiprecious stones. NR



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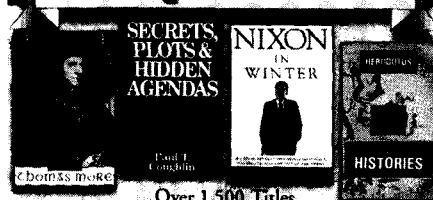
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■ CITY DESK ■

Countdown to Nothing

RICHARD BROOKHISER

THE four horsemen of urban apocalypse—Riot, Fire, Terrorism, and Computer Glitch—bypassed New York as the millennia pivoted. Without thinking much about it, we had planned to go diagonally across Manhattan, to have dinner with friends on the Upper West Side, though as the 31st approached the trip came to seem more and more problematic. We could have taken the subway, but we would have had to change at Times Square. No good. I called car services; they were renting by the hour, for a minimum of eight hours. It's a four-mile walk, which I did in the last transit strike, but my wife had tendonitis. We would have to take a taxi, assuming we could find one.

Come New Year's Eve, however, the streets were bright with beckoning taxi lights. There were hundreds of cops, no disorderly drunks, and flowing traffic. It was like being in an auto-show parade (1990s Yellow Cab division). I've had more trouble getting to Mostly Mozart concerts than to my rendezvous with Y2K. On our friends' television we watched Times Square, where about a million crowded-but-happy visitors shouted, beneath the sconces and chandeliers of advertising, in the city's ballroom.

But this was ominous in its own way. I am not a dirt connoisseur, regretting the Disneyfication of Times Square. Yes, the signage is all commercials, but as light and motion, it dazzles. Then why weren't there more people to be dazzled by it, and by the rest of New York?

City folk made themselves scarce on New Year's Eve partly out of fear, partly from a wholesome reaction to millennial hoopla, which made them want to mark the time-tick quietly. But the sleek nighttime vistas, brightly lit under a black sky, and (apart from Times Square) as underpopulated as a de Chirico, were omens of a weird, silent future.

These thoughts have been planted in my head by "T." T is a compleat Gothamite. He is a former publisher, with a glittering memory backlist. (Who, one wonders after hearing publishers reminisce, was responsible for all the lousy books? Of course: authors.) He came here from elsewhere, a traditional path for local success stories, from Mickey Mantle to Quentin Crisp. Once he arrived, he found that his old WASP roots were tightly interlaced with those of the local aristocracy. He belongs to a group called the St. Nicholas Society, begun in 1835 by Washington Irving who, after years of living abroad, returned to New York to find a number of ethnic fraternal societies—of St. Patrick (Irish), St. Andrew (Scottish), and St. George (English)—and decided to start one to benefit Knickerbockers (i.e., everybody). It survives today, open to descendants of anyone who lived in New York when Irving was born. They meet for black-tie dinners and regale each other with toasts listing old Dutch surnames (it is hard to make poetry out of words like Van Gaasbeek, but they have). Their totem is a rooster weather vane, presented to them by Irving, who claimed that it spun atop the Stadt Huys in the days before Y17C.

This year, T told me, he is moving to Florida. Not for every day of the year, and certainly not because he is retiring, but because T's current interest is the Internet, and Florida has bearable capital-gains taxes. Internet entrepreneurs are not rewarded with salaries; in start-

ups, there are no salaries to go around. Their incentive, besides geek showing-off and the thrill of altering human consciousness, comes from stock options. While New York is happy to trade stocks, its tax structure severely punishes those who try to cash them in. So one more wave of the future has passed us by.

New Yorkers talk of Silicon Alley, but that, says T, is Chamber of Commerce hype. The action is almost all elsewhere, and now the actors are coming in to pluck our infofruits before they rot. AOL, which just bought Time-Warner, is not even headquartered in the coun-

New York's last golden age is burning down to the filter tip.

terhub of the Pacific Northwest; it is in Virginia. So *Time* will end its days as a provider of content, or a hard-copy printout for the dull-witted: the paper version of *Slate*, with color.

This analysis fits with a more general funk over the imminent departure of Mayor Giuliani. If he wins his Senate race, he will be gone in a year. If he loses or punts, term limits will still remove him in two. Every conceivable replacement is worse. Yet Giuliani's record is mixed. He did one impossible thing—turning around the city's crime rates. But history required him to do a second impossible thing—end New York's experiment with socialism in one city. He did not seriously attempt, or even understand, the latter. What do ex-DAs know about tax rates? The last golden age, says T, is burning down to the filter tip.

If he is right, the New York of the Future will be a Colonial Williamsburg of city life as it was between the Gilded Age and the Clinton Era. Manhattan will attract tourists, gawking at the stones, and the already rich; the outer boroughs, meanwhile, will house wards of the state, and immigrants too dumb to have planted themselves in a better place. See Manhattan now—while it's still lively.

NR

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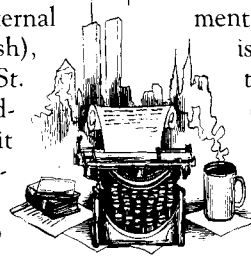


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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Pursuing Crime Prevention with Milton Eisenhower

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 7

THE crime report from the Milton Eisenhower people spurred a lot of talk on the subject, but not enough on smothered questions.

The Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation did an update on a landmark study by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. This study was fired up by President Johnson after the assassination of Martin Luther King. What it asserted, essentially, is that the high crime rate in the United States is traceable to poverty, disparities in income, poor housing, and joblessness.

So 30 years go by and a great deal has happened, most conspicuously a general elation over the reduced crime rate, especially in homicides.

Elliott Currie, most prominently associated with the new report, is a criminologist with the University of California's legal-studies program. He does a pretty neat job of sobering the exultation of those who feel that the fight against crime is substantially won. Crime is down, in the past seven years, but to conclude that a new age has arrived is on the order of noting, a year after Pompeii was destroyed, that casualties from volcanos had sharply declined. Today's crime rate "we would have said is a disaster when we went to work on that crime report 30 years ago."

A key question of the commission was: Would you feel safe walking at night one mile distant from your house? Back then, 31 percent said they'd be afraid to venture that far off. Now the figure is 41 percent.

Soon enough, we get to the chief enthusiasm of the Milton Eisenhower commission, which is to deplore disparities in wealth.

In this, the authors have a problem. Thirty years ago the commission was blaming poverty for the high crime rate. Poverty persists, but we are living, of course, in a historic boom, and one register of the commission's findings has to acknowledge that the reduction in crime must have something to do with the flourishing economy. The joblessness of

30 years ago is not a feature of life when only 4 percent are unemployed. The commission remarks the increase in firearms (double what they then were, rising to 200 million today), but comes to rest on: inequality. Crime has been exacerbated by a "vast and shameful inequality in income, wealth and opportunity." The report notes that more than one-quarter of U.S. children live in poverty.

What is missing in the report is incisive attention to the causes of poverty. They are several, but one is pronounced, and it has very little to do with the kind of poverty one associates with *The Grapes of Wrath*. The principal cause of poverty in America is the rise in the rate of illegitimate births. The commission might usefully have told how many of the children who live in poverty live with a single parent. Having discovered that that is the majority, the commission might have remarked that nearly 70 percent of black Americans are born to unmarried mothers, 18 percent of white Americans, and that the prospects not only of poverty, but also of crime and illiteracy, rise by a factor of 600 percent in single-parent households.

The new rich people, Silicon millionaires, may be guilty of shameful behavior, but the commission doesn't tell us just what it is that they are doing to increase poverty, or to incite crime. It is true that we have doubled the prison population, true also that one-third of young blacks go to jail, certainly true that this is both sad and deplorable, but unconnected with public policy of the type that permits entrepreneurs to flourish. The Milton Eisenhower people have for two generations struggled to make the same old point, which is that the welfare state should expand. They leave out the question: How is it that since it began expanding, all the ends they sought—better education, better behavior—have been undermined?



New Hampshire Headlights

NEW YORK, JANUARY 7

THE two presidential debates and their immediate aftermaths were fine, strenuous exercises in democratic practice. It was smart of C-SPAN and of Chris Matthews to move into the scene immediately, to question the candidates and to bring in the intimate, earnest questions of individual spectators, especially the very young, whose questions tend to be innocently earnest. They were bracing reminders of the value of television in such heady exercises as aspirant presidents are going through in New Hampshire.

On the larger scene, we see in Gore and Bradley two very skillful debaters. They know keenly the uses of the bell. If a question is a little decomposing, why—rattle on until the two minutes are up and accept, with apparent regret, the constraints of time that kept you from developing your points more fully.

But two questions, one of them having to do with gun control, the other with gays in the military, brought out interesting differences in character and approach: Gore, the Fabian; Bradley the Bolshevik.

What is the ideal, in the matter of gun control, as far as Gore is concerned? It is to get all handguns registered. But—but—he is not endorsing legislation to that effect because great endeavors are done a mile at a time, and what he wants now, he told the audience, is such lesser measures as outlawing assault weapons and Saturday Night Specials. Not so for Bradley; he wants the instant realization of his vision.

It is so also in the matter of gays, though with sophisticated differences. The two players believe that it is as manifestly correct that gays should move about within the military without any trace of difficulty, as it was true that American blacks should have been noiselessly integrated into the armed services. But now we saw a slighter difference in approach than in the matter of gun control. Gore would question candidates for senior positions in the military, a litmus test, he all but acknowledged. If Gen. Jones felt as President Gore feels about the matter, then Gen. Jones would qualify to serve as a chief of staff. President Gore would question the general on these matters before deciding whether to promote him.

A waste of time!—President Bradley would simply say to Gen. Jones: My position on gays in the military is total, seamless integration. And since I am the commander in chief, it is manifest that that will be the policy you implement.

Moreover, Mr. Bradley knows the philosophical implications of his position. It is up to the leader, he says, to animate the ideals of the public—this is what leadership consists in. Gore's position is one step removed from this. He believes that acquiescence is more gradually achieved.

Leaving entirely to one side whether it is desirable that all guns should be registered or that gays belong in the military, the differences in political approach are relevant to a voter's decision in which direction—Gore or Bradley—to go in the Democratic contest.

Abraham Lincoln's metamorphosis comes quickly to mind. Lincoln believed passionately in two propositions. The first was that slavery should be forbidden. The second, that self-government requires a consensus.

It can be argued that Lincoln failed, inasmuch as what came wasn't a progressive consensus on the matter of full liberty for the slaves. Rather, the question was settled by a civil war. But Lincoln's philosophy survives the historical narrative. He truly believed that unless the majority of the citizens of the republic, expressing themselves through the mediating devices set up by the Constitution, reached a conclusion on so grave a question, temporizing was exactly the thing to do. Fight an extension of slavery in the territories, fight the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision, fight the legislation that called for returning fugitive slaves—but stop short of anything like an emancipation declaration.

There are differences, obviously, between categorical behavior intended to free black Americans laboring as slaves—differences John Brown did not apprehend—and insisting on the registration of all privately owned guns. On the matter of the gays, the relevant question surely is whether at a level beneath that of commander in chief, judgments should be solicited on the question of what is needed to induce high morale in the military. The argument that there is no difference in overcoming conventional sexual discrimination and overcoming conventional racial discrimination is not self-evident. Something else is at stake, and the exchanges among the six Republican candidates, no one of whom wished to go any further on the issue than the current arrangement, yield a clear national issue. And we have also some

flavor of the political character of the two Democratic contenders.

The Wonderfullitude Of It All

NEW YORK, JANUARY 11

THE rule of thumb on trust/antitrust questions is that if the clienteles being served were different, then the presumption is that an impending merger is not disqualified under the law. So much, however glancingly, on that aspect of the “wonderfullitude”—the expressive word used by Scott Shugar of *Slate* magazine—of the AOL-Time Warner elopement. The figures are very grand, ranging from \$155 to \$183 billion, depending on who does the counting. From time to time one reminds oneself how to apprehend the size of \$1 billion.

If on the day Christ died, an institution began to pay over \$1,000 every day to a creditor, it would not yet, in the year 2000, have paid out \$1 billion. The money in the merger is the equal of the gross domestic product of Mexico.

So much for the very big scene. Coming down one step there is the question, *cui bono?* (who profits?). Well, Time Warner publishes 33 magazines, and AOL has 22 million subscribers. Add to this that Time Warner has cable channels and produces movies. The governing idea all comes under the heading of marketing: How to sell a product now generated by one set of sponsors, to the customers of a second set of sponsors, access to whom would otherwise be marginally unprofitable.

That marketing increase alone brings mist to the eyes of shareholders, but consider, also, symbiosis. If you marry together the bandwidth of the cable people to the output of the computer people, what you get is the possibility of sure-enough streaming. That translates to the possibility that, down the road, when you want to see a movie, you will simply order it up, and it will “stream” in to your computer, and incidentally, from its screen on to your larger television screen. That is a very appetizing prospect for those whose appetites have been awakened by computer technology, but not satisfied.

At the straight consumer level, it is a good time to focus on petty aggravations. One reason to wear moccasins instead of shoes that need lacing is that you spare yourself 21 seconds of effort every morning, prospectively, of your entire life. There are corresponding nuisances in

computer life: for instance, the need to wait a half minute and more for your system to boot up. Or, the irritant that you cannot e-mail any text in which words are italicized (the modulator/demodulator won't let you do it).

In entertainment, there is no reliable way to find out whether the movie being shown is something that might appeal to you. The ratings (*, **, ***, ****) are unreliable. (The operative rule is that a ** movie is reliably bad; a *** movie can be bad-to-good.) What is needed is a screen that will tell you what is playing in the next hour or two and permits the viewer to zoom in to progressive elucidations of what that movie is about (in the manner of Amazon.com's exemplary book-exhumations).

How does one account for the awful torpor of America Online? Even with the fastest current modem (56 kbps) one limps along waiting for summoned data to flash on the screen. And even with cable modems, there is the problem of the neighbors. If everyone decides at given hours (and they do—late afternoons, especially on Saturdays and Sundays) to tune in, the response-time magnifies, reaching and sometimes outpacing the sluggishness of AOL. This is a minor problem if one thinks of it as static. If you frequent a library, you know that the time required to reach into a shelf and pull out a book will never reduce—so forget about it. If you write out your material on a keyboard you know that your finger-speed won't pass by certain anatomical boundaries, and you comport your life to these limitations. You can dictate, and one day they will develop a transcriber with the skill instantly to distinguish between Hugh and hew. Will the new gang take on such problems?

The revelations of the new age are that we are dealing with satellites and with the speed of light. It costs the provider nothing more to send his message dictated in New York to New Delhi, than to Scarsdale. The cheeks redden in appreciation of the accelerability of the service world, but then when we get too inflamed, we are brought back to earth by contemplating the prospect of another generation of flying on planes that shrink in room-per-passenger, and refuse to travel beyond the speed of sound.

Well, it was a bracing moment, given no less than twelve separate stories in the *New York Times*, bountiful treatment normally reserved for a Kennedy catastrophe. So, time out, and counting down for the benefits to reach out beyond the enterprising companies' shareholders.

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

BACK when *Roots* kicked off an interest in genealogy, author Alex Haley advised youngsters to keep a tape recorder at the ready when talking to their grandparents so they could gather stories and reminiscences to help them trace their family trees.

This might have been a fruitful exercise once, but today's seniors have achieved the American nirvana known as being "informed." Their overriding interest now is retirement savvy, and their conversation, such as it is, revolves around IRAs, CDs, munis, T-notes, roll-overs, no-loads, caps, penalties, and discounts. This is no way to keep your ancestors straight; children taking Haley's advice today would come away thinking they were direct descendants of Louis Rukeyser and Jane Bryant Quinn.

Seniors are equally "informed" about health care, able to hold forth at length on CAT scans, quadruple bypasses, every -itis, -osis, -ilia, -plasty, and -therapy known to science; the fine print about deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses in Medicare and HMO legislation; and the price of prescription drugs at Giant on Thursdays between noon and 3 P.M.—all delivered with heavy doses of "access" used as a verb.

When not talking about how to be shrewd medical "consumers," they regale their audience with "informed" descriptions of the enriching "activities"—jogging, bench-pressing, aerobics, yoga, karate, Ping-Pong, square dancing—available at their golden-age apartment complexes, where nobody has time to reminisce and no self-respecting senior would be caught dead napping unless he's caught dead.

In 1934, when Social Security was being debated, a Republican congressman predicted that it would destroy "the romance of life." New Dealers called him "flinty," the Depression-era equivalent of "mean-spirited," but in one sense he was right: Today's old people are less colorful and entertaining than they used

to be, and the big losers are their grandchildren. These poor kids will never savor the galloping eccentricities, unfurled prejudices, and baroque sickbeds of geriatric top bananas who could elevate old age to an art form.

The world of my childhood contained few independent retirees. Grandparents, usually grandmothers, lived with their married children, usually their daughters, because "A son is a son till he takes a wife, but a daughter is a daughter all of her life." This is still true, and old ladies still know it, but now that they belong to an officially designated special-interest group they don't dare say it because it sounds "divisive."

Divisive statements were Granny's stock in trade, as when I told her I had seen Mrs. So-and-So on my way home from school and she said, "She dyes her hair but she's very nice." Keeping up with her Q.E.D. opinions made me feel like the scullery maid in the fairy tale who no sooner scrubs out the three drops of tallow wax than they reappear somewhere else. As a child I could not get a line on her, but when I entered adolescence, everything suddenly fell into place.

My legs had sprouted a veritable lawn and I wanted to shave them. I knew Granny would object, but instead of her usual tragedienne set piece (gaze heavenward, place hand on heart), she merely sighed irritably and said, "Oh, don't be silly, it won't show."

Won't show? I wondered if she was going blind and had assumed, in her imperious fashion, that nobody else could see either. Then I understood: In her day, leg hair *didn't* show. She spent her youth in black cotton stockings and long skirts, and in some corner of her mind nothing had changed.

I displayed the same psychic mechanism recently when, discussing abortion with a woman less than half my age, I said: "What's the matter with you girls nowadays? Why do you keep getting pregnant? Don't you know about diaphragms?"

The young woman's jaw dropped. A

querulous note had crept into my voice that had never been there before. It was an old woman's voice, but instead of feeling self-conscious I was hard put not to laugh as I thought of Granny: I sounded just like her.

A child who lives with an old person learns that identity is a calendar. America would be a calmer place if we could all admit this. Ruminating on the timeline of prejudice, besides being interesting, would keep us from dissolving in panicky revisionism when a revered historical figure is discovered to have held a bigoted opinion, and would teach the young that their own standards of tolerance are likewise the product of chronological determinism and no more immune to change than anyone else's.

Despite all the talk about "catastrophic" illnesses, children today have no understanding of what aging really means, as we can see from a chemotherapy public-service announcement that, to me, is incredible. An old man is visited by all of his grandchildren, who range in age "from 3 to 18." He longs to take a picture of them sitting together on the porch eating ice cream, but he doesn't do it because "I didn't have the energy to walk upstairs and get the camera."

Why didn't he send one of the kids up to get it? More to the point, why didn't one of them volunteer? I spent the best years of my life threading needles, looking up phone numbers, and reading out obits. Now it's I who squint, but thanks to my training as an old lady's handmaiden, my own burgeoning infirmities are easier to bear.

My uninformed grandmother taught me all about catastrophic illnesses, though she never called them by their medical names. She just held forth on turning to stone, coughing up chunks of lung, wasting away, goiters as big as grapefruit, and what is now called "osteoporosis." As Granny explained it: "She bent over to button her shoes and just broke right in half. The undertaker tried to put her back together but he didn't do it right and you could tell."

Children love this sort of thing, but nowadays they have to go to a horror movie to get it.

NR

Miss King can be reached at P. O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, Va. 22404.

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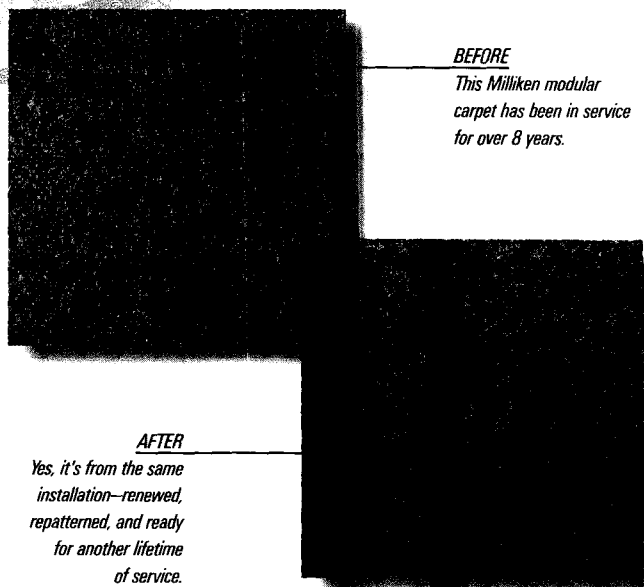
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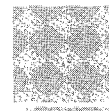


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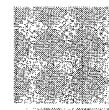
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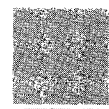
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